This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Bought from the Fund for
CURRENT MODERN POETRY
given by
MORRIS GRAY
CLASS OF 1877

WILD SCENES

IN

SOUTH AMERICA;

OR,

LIFE IN THE LLANOS OF VENEZUELA.

BY

DON RAMON PAEZ.

"NIHIL ARDUUM MORTALIBUS."

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 124 GRAND STREET.
1862

2333.35
SA9678.46
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
1863, April 20.
Gray Fund.

"Y greyes van sin cuento
Paciendo tu verdura desde el llano
Que tiene por lindero el horizonte,
Hasta el erguido monte
De inaccesible nieve siempre cano."

ANDRES BELLO, *Silva á la Zona Tórrida.*

Entered, according to act of Congress, in the year 1862, by

CHARLES SCRIBNER,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

JOHN F. TROW,
PRINTER, STEREOTYPER, AND ELECTROTYPER,
48 & 50 Greene Street,
New York.

627
47-37
34

TO

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

EDWARD B. KETCHUM, ESQ.,

THESE PAGES,

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN FOR HIS ESPECIAL AMUSEMENT, ARE

Affectionately Dedicated,

AS A TOKEN OF THE HIGH REGARD ENTERTAINED FOR HIM AND

HIS ESTIMABLE FAMILY BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

It was my lot several years ago—I need not state how many—to be brought forth into this world amid the wild scenes which I propose to describe. Later in life I was fortunate enough to be sent by my parents to England, for the purpose of finishing my education under the tuition of the learned fathers at the College of Stonyhurst. While there, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of the inimitable author of "Wanderings in South America," Charles Waterton, Esq., who years before had also been an inmate of that celebrated institution, and whose book became at once my favorite study, on account of the graphic descriptions it contains of animals and objects with which I was already familiar. The works of the distinguished traveller, Baron von Humboldt, who first made those regions known to the civilized world, next afforded me an endless source of scientific enjoyment, developing in me an early taste for the natural history and physical wonders of my native land.

On my return home, I immediately turned my steps toward

> "Those matted woods . . . . .
> Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,"

anxious to study nature in her own sanctuary; but, owing to the unfortunate state of affairs in the country, I did not enjoy long my cherished dreams of exploring it through all its extent. Sufficient information was, however, obtained in my rambles through the plains, to enlarge upon a subject scarcely touched upon by travellers.

Thus from my earliest days have I been associated with the scenes forming the text of the present narrative, which I venture to lay before the public, trusting more in the indulgence and characteristic generosity of the Anglo-Saxon race toward foreigners, than in my own ability to fulfil the arduous undertaking. But I must be here permitted to return my most sincere thanks to Mr. Alexander Cotheal and other friends, for the pains they have taken in weeding the manuscript of many imperfections in the language. To Mr. Frederick Melby, a Danish artist of great merit, who, not long since, visited the Llanos and various other parts of Venezuela, I am also indebted for his kindness in placing at my disposal his valuable collection of sketches: from these, and from others taken by myself during my journeys, Monsieur V. Nehlig has been enabled to produce the accompanying illustrations with singular fidelity to the subject.

NEW YORK, *August*, 1862.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	The Departure,	1
II.	The Morros,	16
III.	The Llanos,	26
IV.	The Llaneros,	40
V.	Scenes at the Fishery,	57
VI.	Wild Horses,	74
VII	Across the Pampas,	85
VIII.	La Portuguesa,	99
IX.	The Apure River,	116
X.	Savannas of Apure,	133
XI.	El Frio,	148
XII.	Birds of Ill Omen and Carrion Hawks,	163
XIII.	The Rodeo,	175
XIV.	Branding Scenes,	189
XV.	Plants and Snakes,	202
XVI.	Tiger Stories,	222
XVII.	Shooting Adventures,	238
XVIII.	Mata Totumo,	251
XIX.	Matiyure,	267
XX.	The Cimarronera,	280
XXI.	Los Borales,	289
XXII.	Incidents of the War of Independence,	302
XXIII.	Incidents of the War of Independence,	319

CHAP.		PAGE
XXIV.	Scenes at the Pass of Apurito,	335
XXV.	Calabozo,	348
XXVI.	Caracas,	361
XXVII.	Monagas,	378
XXVIII.	Maracaibo,	388
XXIX.	The Goajiros,	404
XXX.	A Cruise in the Caribbean Sea,	417
XXXI.	Ho! for Maracaibo,	435
XXXII.	Pare,	454
XXXIII.	The Exile,	479

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

		PAGE
1.	Frontispiece—Stampede of Wild Horses.	
2.	Morros de San Juan,	19
3.	Pounding Corn,	36
4.	The Caribe,	68
5.	The Electric Eel,	68
6.	Troop of Wild Horses on the Alert,	74
7.	Across the Pampas,	90
8.	Encounter with a Crocodile,	113
9.	The Saman,	122
10.	The Manatee,	162
11.	The Rodeo,	175
12.	Branding Scenes,	189
13.	Training the Boys,	200
14.	Aristolochia Apurensis,	219
15.	The Jaguar,	222
16.	*Garzoneando*,	242
17.	The Armadillo,	245
18.	Llanero Encampment,	247
19.	The Great Ant-Eater,	257
20.	Young Crocodile,	269
21.	Crocodile Basking in the Sun,	278
22.	Capture of Spanish Gunboats by Llanero Cavalry,	322

PAGE

23. Ferrying the Cattle across the Apure, . . . 335
24. Dr. Gallegos Sewing the Belly of a Wounded Horse, . . 338
25. Homeward Bound, ... 345
26. Caracas, ... 365
27. Borders of the Lake of Maracaibo, ... 395
28. The Saw-fish, ... 396
29. The Tapir, ... 398
30. The Bonito, ... 422
31. The Dolphin, ... 423
32. The Sword-fish, ... 425
33. The Butterfly Flower, ... 431
34. Belisario, ... 441

WILD SCENES IN SOUTH AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEPARTURE.

On a fine morning in the month of December of the year 1846, a jolly cavalcade, or rather heterogeneous assemblage from the various castes composing the bulk of the population in the Venezuelian Republic, was to be seen traversing the streets of the beautiful town of Maracay, in the direction of the road leading to the *Llanos* or Pampas of Apure, a region widely celebrated for its wildness, its dangers, and the many exploits enacted therein. There the father of the writer owned extensive cattle farms, and the aforesaid company proposed spending the remainder of the summer season in hunting among the untamed herds constituting the wealth and commerce of that wild region.

I shall never forget the exciting scenes of that eventful day; it forms one of the most pleasing episodes of my life. Full well do I remember also the picturesqueness of the variegated costumes of the

riders; their red and blue ponchos flowing in the wind as they cantered to and fro through the unusually animated streets of the little town, taking leave of their friends, and provisioning their saddle-bags with the necessaries they required; the trampling and neighing of horses; the parting adieux and waving of handkerchiefs in the hands of lively brunettes, as we defiled under the windows and balconies of the Calle Real, crowded with anxious relatives, friends, and sweethearts of many a gallant cavalier, who might never return from his distant and perilous journey. For my part, I confess, that although for sundry reasons I regretted departing from our romantic abode in the valleys of Aragua, still, so great was my desire to visit the land of the wild bull and crocodile, that for several nights before leaving home I dreamed of nothing but wild scenes and terrible encounters with the lords of the savannas.

The method of conducting a South American cattle farm is entirely different from that usually practised among the more peaceful scenes of the North American prairies. Here the cattle, accustomed from their birth to the friendly voice of man, readily obey his commands and follow him instinctively wherever he leads them. In the plains of South America, on the contrary, the herds hear no other than the voice of Nature in her sublimest moods, in the thunders of the storm, and when in her vernal showers she calls upon the crocodiles and other drowsy reptiles, awakening them from their periodical summer's lethargy; and nightly the roar and screams of savage beasts answering each other in

the darkness. The cattle, thus roaming over extensive plains, and free of all restraint, necessarily require to be occasionally collected together for the purpose of branding and marking the young calves, which increase there with astonishing rapidity. If this precaution were neglected, they would in time become so dispersed over those boundless plains, as to be altogether irreclaimable. This operation cannot be accomplished, however, without a great number of men and horses, both well trained to and thoroughly acquainted with this demi-savage occupation. Therefore we mustered now quite a little army of *Llaneros*, or natives of the Llanos, who are the only individuals capable of prosecuting and successfully performing the arduous duties appertaining to these cattle forays.

Our retinue presented pretty much the appearance of an oriental caravan; it consisted of more than a hundred individuals of all grades and colors; from the bright, rubicund faces of merry England's sons, to the jetty phiz of the native African, all of whom, notwithstanding, fraternized as though sprung from the same race.

Our company, moreover, had been organized as if for a military campaign, and formed the nucleus of a more extensive camp, to be increased by additions from different places along the route. The leader—General Paez—besides having acquired in early life a practical knowledge of this peculiar warfare, possessed in addition the rare gift of being—in the opinion of many—"the first rider in South America,"

and withal the most accomplished Llanero in the Republic. His dispositions were accordingly made in a manner most likely to insure success in this strange campaign; passing in review every person and every object, with as scrupulous care as he bestowed upon the legions under his command in the long strife for his country's freedom; distributing each particular horse with reference to the skill and special duties of his rider, and every load according to the strength of each beast of burden.

Next in importance to the Leader was a Surgeon and Physician, whose valuable services were to be frequently called into requisition. Although we were not now to encounter powder and ball, we had to deal with no less dangerous enemies in the form of wild bulls, snakes, and crocodiles, without reckoning the pestiferous marshes of the country.

After our Surgeon came the Treasurer; his duty was to conduct safely the military chest of the expedition, consisting of sundry bags of hard dollars, ponchos, checkered linen handkerchiefs of the peculiar pattern worn with so much pride by Llaneros on the head, knives, sword blades, and various other articles of barter which they prize more than money itself, and for the attainment of which they labor hard and even expose their lives.

To me was assigned the honorable post of Secretary to the expedition, whose pleasant duty was to keep its records, and at times those of the political "Bulls and Bears" of the country at large. Attached to this office were an English amateur of wild sports, an English artist of considerable merit, and a

few others, who, like myself, not being sufficiently trained to the hard operations of the field, were forced to be content with the tamer occupations of the cattle farm, and only an occasional foray among the smaller game of the savannas.

I will mention two other individuals, who, although filling less exalted positions than the preceding—being the cook and the washerman—were very necessary to our comfort; not that we felt over-scrupulous with regard to the dressing of either ourselves or that of the savory dishes of the Llanos—where I relished a beafsteak *au naturel* with as much gusto as though prepared by the Delmonicos or Maillards of New York—but an early cup of coffee was a luxury not to be despised, and an occasional scouring of our scanty wardrobe was equally an essential. The cook was a mulatto by birth, whose name—Mónico—bore some similarity to that of the distinguished caterer of William street, and was as great a favorite with us as the latter is among the "down town" gentry of the great city, not only on account of his good nature and skill in the preparation of the delicious beverage before mentioned,

"que en los festines
La fiebre insana templará á Lieo,"

but also for the aid he lent his companions in mending their tattered garments, being as accomplished a tailor and shoemaker as cook. Gaspar, the washerman, was a lame negro rather advanced in years, but with all the vivacity of his race still sparkling in his eyes. He had earned some reputation in his time as a brave soldier during the protracted war of Inde-

pendence, but, disabled now by a bullet and sundry tiger scars, testimonials of his good service in the cause of humanity, could perform no other work than the rather feminine one allotted to him on this occasion. He, however, possessed other accomplishments, among which the chief was that of recounting his adventures in the wars and with the wild beasts of the field, which made him a desirable companion and general favorite.

Poor fellows! they are both dead, and their bones, as well as those of most of that little band of heroes, are now bleaching in the hot sun of the tropics, amid the waving grass of those savannas once rendered famous by their deeds of valor and enlivened by their chivalrous songs. After faithfully following their leader through dangers and hardships no less terrible than those of the battle-field, one by one they fell, not by foe "in battle arrayed," nor the terrible stroke of the wild bull, but by the assassin's treacherous hand, and those of the unprincipled myrmidon of military misrule; not because of their political influence in the councils of the Nation, but for being the faithful followers of their beloved Chieftain.

The reader has now been introduced to those constituting the Staff of the expedition; but in addition a host of attendants and idlers formed the rank and file of this motley assemblage. Each one of these had a special duty to perform. Some were *asistentes*, or the personal attendants of the former, as no *blanco* ventures to travel in the Llanos without some *cicerone* of the country to guide him over the trackless wastes, to saddle his horse, and see that both horse and rider

are comfortably quartered for the night. Others were appointed to conduct the beasts of burden, of which there were a formidable array; while the most experienced riders were intrusted with the care and guidance of our *madrina*, or pack of supernumerary horses, which formed by far the most efficient element of our expedition.

Our drove consisted of about two hundred spirited chargers, as swift and slim as any that ever tramped the hot sands of Yemen or the Sahara; these were to be reinforced with fresh relays from the cattle farms, to supply the place of those which might be carried off from various causes during those exciting hunts.

The only method of travelling as yet adopted in the country is on horseback. This is at first somewhat fatiguing to those unaccustomed to long journeys; but the traveller soon becomes inured to it, and ends by preferring it to any other, on account of the exhilarating sensation of independence he experiences; at all events, it is the most convenient that can be adopted in a country which, like the Pampas, is subject to vast inundations, and overgrown in all its extent by the rank herbage of the savannas. On the mountains, mules are usually preferred for their surefootedness, as also for their astonishing endurance of hunger and fatigue; but in the Pampas, where journeys must be accomplished with great expedition and rapidity, they are comparatively worthless from the shortness of their gait, and also because their hoofs become softened by the marshy soil which everywhere prevails, they being never shod, owing to a mistaken notion of the riders, who believe that by so doing the sure-

footedness of the animal is impaired. The best horses, consequently, had been selected on this occasion, but were not to be saddled until we reached the Llanos. These were all collected into a *madrina* or drove, together with the *vaqueros* or horses destined for the chase, and placed under the charge of half a dozen experienced Llaneros, who were to drive them loose across the country. In the mean time we would perform on mules the first four days of our journey, which lay across the rough and hilly country between the valleys and the plains. As beasts of burden, mules are particularly serviceable; in view of this we had collected a pack of about twenty for the purpose of transporting our loads, consisting partly, as I have observed, of various descriptions of goods for distribution among the Llaneros, in part payment of their wages; but the greater number were laden with our own chattels and provisions; for although the Llanos are justly regarded as a land of plenty, the habitations are yet so widely distant, that it is expedient to provide for all contingencies.

Our road, at times, lay across extensive fields of sugar cane, indigo, and tobacco; or through vast plantations of Erithynas (*bucarales*) raised for the protection of the shade-loving Cacao trees, loaded with the luscious bean that yields its "divine food" * to gods and mortals. At other times, extensive tracks of waste lands (*rastrojos*) overgrown with a luxuriant vegetation, intercepted the line of our march, giving

* Linnæus, in his enthusiasm for the delightful beverage obtained from the cacao bean, named the plant that produces it *theobroma*—food for the gods.

the country a wild and desolate aspect. Land is so cheap and plentiful in Venezuela, that it is always more advantageous for the planter, whenever the land has become exhausted with repeated cultivation, to clear a new patch of ground for his crop, than to trouble himself about restoring to the ground by artificial means what nature will provide in the course of time. The rapidity with which a patch of waste land, that only a year or two before had been abandoned as unserviceable, becomes covered with an exuberant vegetation in the tropics, is quite extraordinary. Hardly have the plough and hoe of the industrious husbandman ceased to harass the land with their incessant toil, when an entirely different crop of indigenous plants, which had been silently struggling for existence, now make their appearance, and change the aspect of the landscape with new forms of vegetation. Insignificant weeds at first, scarcely worth noticing, they soon attain sufficient strength to arrest the progress of any stragglers that might have remained of the plantation. In a short time they have acquired the size and form of well-developed trees, with boughs spreading far above a man on horseback; and before two summers have elapsed, not a vestige remains of what was once a flourishing plantation. An endless variety of creepers, such as convolvulus, bignonias, and passion flowers, now find support among their numerous branches, forming with them the most picturesque bowers and arcades, or hanging by their sides in graceful garlands and festoons of the most exquisite beauty. Our troop of supernumerary horses, as if unwilling to leave behind

these delightful retreats, did not fail to profit by the tangled nature of the cover, frequently eluding the vigilance of the drivers, and dashing forward whenever they saw an opening to decamp. The most skilful management on the part of the drivers was then required to disentangle them from the thick jungle; otherwise we should have arrived at the end of our journey with less than half their number. It was quite amusing to see those reckless fellows gliding here and there through the tangled woods in full pursuit of the refractory animals, now hanging from one leg down the sides of their steeds, or stretched over their necks to avoid being lifted from the saddle by the intervening branches. In spite of all precaution, and the vigilance of their drivers, we missed several valuable hunters in the course of the journey, every one of which made his way back to the *potreros* or old grazing grounds with unerring precision. So remarkable is this peculiarity in horses of one place driven across a strange country, and the cunning they display in effecting their escape, that although we left instructions along the route to secure all deserters, most of those we missed at a considerable distance from Maracay, made their way back across the fields, avoiding in their flight the public roads and populated districts through which we had passed.

Late in the evening we reached San Luis de Cura, a town of some importance on our route. Although we had there many friends of whose hospitality we could have availed ourselves, we preferred passing the night at a *Pulperia*, or country inn, a short distance in advance—hotels being yet unknown in that

part of the country. Our numerous retinue, and especially our horses, accustomed to the unrestrained freedom of the *potrero*—an enclosed field attached to the *Pulperia*—precluded all idea of seeking accommodations within the narrow limits of a city residence. Declining, therefore, all invitations to that effect, we pushed on to a place called El Rodeo, a few miles further.

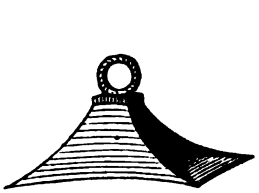
San Luis de Cura—or Villa de Cura, as it is usually called—is a sort of entrepôt to which the people of the Llanos resort from time to time to barter the products of their farms for those of foreign manufacture, retailed there by country traders. It is, in fact, the connecting link between the agricultural and pastoral sections of the republic; hence we find there the strongest admixture of wild and civilized manners and costumes curiously intermingled in all the pursuits and vocations of the people. Thus we often meet with persons of respectability clad in the elegant city dress, and riding a horse entirely caparisoned in the gaudy attire of the Llanos, and *vice versa*.

Our accommodations at the inn were not of the most inviting description, neither its apartments nor the *potrero* affording much comfort to the weary caravan after their long ride. A stony bank on the slope of the barren hill for couch and the broad dome of heaven for roof, with not even posts enough from which to sling our hammocks, was all the hospitality we received at the Pulperia. We slept soundly notwithstanding, softening our beds of pebbles by spreading our ponchos over them, while each man's saddle,

serving at once as pillow and larder, furnished us with supper on this occasion. The llanero saddle is admirably adapted for the rough journeys of the country, and though somewhat ponderous, renders good service to the wandering Llanero in his long peregrinations. These saddles, usually styled *vaqueras*, in allusion to the occupations of the riders, appear to be modelled after the gay accoutrements of the Arabs; the same profusion of silver ornament and bright-colored trimmings of morocco, the high peak in front, and still higher cantle behind. A comfortable *pellon* or shabrack, made either of an entire sheepskin or horse hair dyed black and neatly braided at one end, covers the entire seat, and hangs from it in graceful folds. Numbers of bags and pockets—*bolsas*—made of the same material as the saddle, and in keeping with the rest, are affixed to it for the purpose of stowing away all those little commodities so essential to the traveller on a long journey, such as *papelon*, a sort of brown sugar in cakes resembling maple sugar, cheese, cakes of Indian corn, and *aguardiente*, a beverage equally celebrated for its use and its abuse. The stirrups, which are usually carved from a block of wood, present the peculiarity of being longer and heavier than any ever adopted by equestrians. Although termed *africanos*, they are just the reverse of their cognomens, as can be seen by comparing the subjoined designs.

An expert rider never places his whole foot in the stirrup, as is the case with the Arabs, but holds it with his big toe, so as to disentangle himself readily in case of a fall. This habit gives a crooked shape to

the feet and legs of the rider, which peculiarity entitles him to the credit of being a good horseman.



The carvings on some of these stirrups are very fanciful, and display considerable taste. Their beauty is thought to consist chiefly in the two triangular appendages at the bottom with which they urge on their horses.

The *cobija* or poncho is also a most indispensable commodity on these long journeys; and no traveller should omit providing himself with one, especially during the rainy season. It is fully six feet square, with a hole in the centre to admit the head, and its office is twofold, viz., to protect the rider and his cumbrous equipment from the heavy showers and dews of the tropics, and to spread under him when there is no convenience for slinging the hammock. It also serves as a protection from the scorching rays of the sun, experience having taught its wearer that a thick woollen covering keeps the body moist and cool by day, and warm by night. The poncho used in Venezuela is made double, by sewing together two different blankets, the outside one being dark blue and the inner one bright red, which colors, as is well known, are differently acted upon by light and heat. By exposing alternately the sides of the poncho to

the light according to the state of the weather, those modifications of temperature most agreeable to the body are obtained. Thus, when the day is damp and cloudy, the dark side of the poncho, which absorbs the most heat, is turned towards the light, while the reverse is the case when the red surface is presented to the sun. On the same principle, the *manta*, or white linen poncho, is worn when the sun is very powerful, the color in this instance repelling the rays of light more readily than the red surface of woollen materials. The *manta* is a very expensive luxury on account of the embroideries that usually decorate it, and which might rival in elegance the finest skirt of a New York or Parisian *belle*. When worn by a gallant cavalier on a sunny day, it presents in the distance a very picturesque appearance, not unlike the graceful bornouse of the Arabs.

Equally useful and expensive is the hammock, one of the few articles of native manufacture produced in Venezuela, and one which has thus far baffled the ingenuity of foreign weavers to imitate. It is woven by hand on looms of rude construction in very tasteful designs, and trimmed with fringings of the most complicated pattern. A fine hammock costs from fifty to sixty dollars.

It may truly be said that with hammock, poncho, and the saddle with its array of pockets, &c., the roving dwellers of the pampas are at home wherever they may be. They are, in fact, the tent, bed, and valise best adapted to the country, affording them all the comfort that a princely rajah could experience under his gorgeous panoply of oriental magnificence,

and possessing, moreover, the advantage of being easily conveyed from place to place, in a small compass, by the riders. The hammock and the poncho usually form a bundle behind the saddle; with them the traveller makes himself a tent when camping out, by stretching out a rope from end to end of the hammock, over which the poncho is thrown at oblique angles, and then tied securely to the rope. Under it the traveller may now defy the storm, and even Old Boreas himself, as the stronger the tent is impelled to and fro, the more lulling to the sleeper will be the motion imparted to it from the outside.

It is surprising to see a horse of so small stature as those from the Llanos generally are, carry on his back both the weight of the rider and his ponderous equipment for such considerable distances; but the fact is, that the loads are so well distributed and counterbalanced, that the animals feel no material inconvenience therefrom.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORROS.

EARLY the next morning we were aroused by the trampling of horses and tinkling of stirrups close to our resting places, apprising us that the hour of departure was near at hand. To travel with comfort in those hot regions, it is necessary to make the most of the absence of the sun, before its rays descend to the earth in glowing streams, parching the body and spirits of the traveller. Our people, therefore, commenced to saddle and load as early as three o'clock A. M. The operation usually occupied considerable time, as each animal had to be hunted in the dark, as well as its accoutrements. The baggage mules, especially, required more than ordinary skill in replacing and adjusting the loads upon their backs by means of a hundred turns of the *lazos*, or raw-hide halters. And even after the greatest precautions, the vicious creatures endeavored to displace their loads by running against each other or rolling on the ground, to the inconceivable disgust of the drivers, who were often compelled to alight from their sumpters to put things to rights.

Our road lay this day across a wild and desolate valley, presenting the appearance of having once been

the scene of violent convulsions of nature, judging from the distorted masses of granité and gneiss piled along the route. The morning, though moonless, was bright with stars, which in those latitudes sparkle like diamonds in a setting of azure. The air was balmy; and the solitude of the spot, only broken by the occasional shriek of a night owl, or the refreshing murmur of a mountain stream, was truly sublime.

Slowly winding our course down the rugged sides of a deep ravine, we came suddenly in view of a most glorious spectacle. The delicate tints of dawn were already gilding the rugged crest of the distant mountains; above these rose in silent grandeur what appeared at first a heavy cloud of an intense blue, the irregular outlines of which set in bold relief against the transparent sky, forming the background to the picture. I eagerly spurred my mule forward to gain an eminence from whence I could contemplate more advantageously that magnificent spectacle, when, to my great astonishment, I discovered that, what I had supposed a cloud, was in fact the famous promontory known as the Morros de San Juan, the singular conformation of which has given rise to many speculations and legendary dissertations on the part of savants and others less versed in scientific researches. When the sun rose above the horizon, a more extraordinary scene was never unfolded to the eye of the spectator. The huge and rugged mountain, some thousand feet high, stood in the midst of a desolate gulf, apparently of volcanic origin; while the vegetation, stunted and scrubby for want of adequate nourishment, contrasted singularly with the granite

masses scattered all over the valley. The meandering rivulet of La Puerta, twice the scene of sanguinary conflicts between patriots and Spaniards, threaded its sparkling way through that Valley of Death, to mix its waters with those of the beautiful Guárico in the distance. In both of those engagements the arms of Spain were victorious; but, as often happened in those days of *guerra á muerte*, the victors steeped their laurels in the blood of the vanquished with unsparing hand. These triumphs were shared alternately by the monster Boves and the sanguinary Morillo. It would be difficult to find two more bloody wretches than these myrmidons of despotism, whose very names are to this day the avenging cry against the race from which they both sprang. The forces opposed to them in these engagements hardly amounted to one-half their own numbers; but the patriots under Bolivar accepted the battle with the despair of men who have no alternative between death and an ignominious yoke. It is asserted that the rivulet became, on both occasions, completely glutted with the gore and dead bodies of the vanquished. Morillo had a very narrow escape from the lance of Gregorio Monagas—celebrated as a matador, and for nothing else—who deliberately attacked the Spanish chieftain in the midst of his staff. Although the bold Llanero succeeded in piercing the groin of the Spaniard with his lance, the wound was not sufficiently deep to cause his death.

The rugged crest of the mountain surrounded by an atmosphere resplendently clear, the wild and

shattered rocks, piled like the giant skeletons of an extinct race, together with the painful associations connected with the spot, made an impression upon my mind not easily forgotten.

Although I had often experienced a keen desire to see this natural wonder of my country, I could not repress a feeling of regret at the recollection of the sanguinary scenes enacted on this spot, and that my first impressions of astonishment should be replaced by others of a less pleasing character.

On awakening from the reverie into which the scene had plunged me, I perceived for the first time that I was alone, my less contemplative companions having proceeded on their journey while I was absorbed in wonder. I felt glad of my solitude, for the very silence seemed to breathe a prayer to the Almighty for the martyred children of Liberty before one of his most glorious temples.

We reached the village of San Juan in time to breakfast at the house of our excellent friend Don José Pulido, a gentleman of most amiable and hospitable disposition. While they prepared our morning meal, I repaired to the outskirts of the village to sketch the Morros, which from the distance appeared two huge castles in ruins. The continued action of the waters has furrowed the sides of the mountain—composed principally of a peculiar limestone—into many fantastic forms. The same wearing action has in like manner perforated the calcareous rock into a thousand subterranean passages or chasms of fathomless depth, it being asserted by persons who have approached sufficiently near the entrance of these caves, that a bowlder rolled down the abyss, is never heard to strike the bottom. I regretted exceedingly that our short stay at this place would not permit me to visit the interior of the main entrance to these subterranean passages, no person ever having ventured within the dark abode—as it is currently believed—of demons and the like. As a proof of this assertion, the villagers point out to the inquisitive traveller a spring issuing from that Tartarus highly charged with sulphurated hydrogen gas, the fumes of which are in themselves sufficiently powerful to convey the idea that something diabolical must be brewing in the bowels of the stupendous mountain. The spring, however, possesses highly medicinal virtues; on this account it is often visited by invalids from various parts of the country, especially those affected with rheumatic or scrofulous complaints.

During a heavy freshet, the bones of an antedi-

luvian animal, supposed to be those of a mastodon, were disinterred by the torrent in the bed of a ravine. A portion of these bones were sent to us by our zealous friend Don José, as a great curiosity; as such they were transferred to the British Minister at Caracas, and finally consigned by him to the great Museum in London.

The village of San Juan is likewise noted for its fine climate and the total absence of epidemics. Invalids affected with pulmonary complaints find there also an air and temperature most congenial. Beyond these advantages, San Juan offers no other attractions to the stranger capable of inducing a longer sojourn than is absolutely necessary, as not even a ranch has been raised there for the convenience of those seeking its beneficent waters.

After partaking of a substantial breakfast, composed of the most popular dishes of the country, such as *carne frita*, *sancocho*, and some delicious fish from the river Guárico, we bade adieu to our estimable host, Don José, and continued our journey down the stony bottom of a narrow *quebrada* or ravine, noted for its many windings, and the quantities of sharp stones that pave the way; these are evidently the detached fragments of the basaltic formation constituting the base of the Morros. At Flores, a miserable country inn like all the rest along this route, we stopped a few moments to refresh ourselves with *guarapo*, a kind of cider made from the juice of sugar cane, or by dissolving *papelon* in water and allowing it to ferment for a few days. The guarapo of Flores is celebrated throughout the country, and no person

passing through this place ever omits to call for it. When mixed with aguardiente, it forms what is termed *carabina*, (carbine;) the effects rarely fail to knock down those who rashly brave its fire.

Our next stopping place was the village of Ortiz, a little beyond that of Parapara. Taken together, they might be considered as the Pillars of Hercules to the grassy Mediterranean of the Llanos, and the terminus of civilized pursuits in that quarter, as there you find the last vestiges of agriculture and the useful arts. In addition to small patches of sugar cane and Indian corn raised by the inhabitants for their own consumption, they excel in the manufacture of leather, saddles, and their appurtenances, which they sell to all parts of the country. Beyond this, nothing is to be met with but wild herds of cattle grazing on prairies or steppes of vast extent, with the exception of the narrow belt of park-like scenery intervening between these and a ridge of low, rocky hills—*galeras*—which skirts the ancient shore of the great basin of those pampas. The *galeras* were doubtless the natural rampart of that extraordinary body of waters which, at some remote epoch, must have filled the space now forming the grazing grounds of Venezuela, as attested by the nature of the soil and the organic remains found imbedded in the clay.

I noticed at Ortiz the same trap formation of the Morros, with extensive beds of basaltic slate protruding through the sides of the hills. Entire columns of this slate, varying from four to five feet in length by six inches diameter, are used in the village for

paving the thresholds of houses, their quadrangular form adapting them perfectly for this purpose without any additional labor after being detached from the rock. The action of the waters during the untold lapse of ages, or perhaps the irruptions of the sea itself when it beat against the sides of the hills, has caused the partial disintegration of the rock in many places, and scattered the debris far and wide over the surrounding country. Nevertheless, vegetation seemed nowhere affected in the least by this vast accumulation of loose stones; on the contrary, wherever it was favored by the depressions of the ground, trees of large dimensions, noted for hardness and durability, sprang up, forming dense forests on either side of the road. Foremost in the long catalogue of splendid timber trees of Venezuela, we found there growing in great perfection the *Vera*, or Lignum Vitæ—Zigophylum arboreum—the wood of which is so hard that it turns the edge of the best-tempered tools; breaking or splitting it seems equally impossible, on account of the interweaving of its fibres, which cross each other in diagonal layers. This tree has a wide range over the country, especially near the sea-coast, which circumstance renders it extremely useful in the construction of wharves, as well as for the keels of ships; the attacks of the teredo or sea-worm are futile upon the iron network of its fibres, on which account it can remain under water for an indefinite period and eventually become petrified. The useful *Guayacan* or guaiacum of the arts, a nearly allied species of this tree, is also found here in the greatest abundance; unfortunately it is too short to be

employed for the same purposes as the former; it finds, however, numerous applications in naval construction, especially for blocks and pulleys for the rigging of vessels. Turners employ it likewise for various articles requiring extreme hardness and a close grain.

The *Alcornoque*, a most beautiful tree, somewhat resembling the American elm, and scarcely inferior to the foregoing, raises here its graceful head above the rest, affording the cattle a permanent shade even during the driest seasons. It must not be confounded, however, with the well-known Spanish oak—Quercus suber—which yields the cork of commerce. It is largely employed in the Llanos in the construction of houses and fences. Braziletto wood—Cesalpinia braziletto—so celebrated for its beautiful dye, is so abundant here also, that all the fences at Ortiz and Parapara are made of this valuable dyewood.

The list of useful trees peculiar to this region could be extended beyond the limits of this chapter, were it not for the fear of taxing the patience of my reader with an abstract nomenclature. I cannot pass unnoticed, however, two other trees of no less importance to the natives, on account of their timber and medicinal properties; these are the *Tacamahaca*—Elaphrium tomentosum—and the tree that yields the precious balsam of copaiva—Copaifera officinalis. By making incisions in the trunk and branches of both these trees, a resinous fluid, possessing great healing powers when applied to wounds and other ailments of the flesh, is obtained in great abundance and collected in tin cans placed under the incisions. The

former is particularly abundant in the province of Guayana, where it attains to great dimensions. Its resin, an opaque, lemon-colored substance resembling wax, is very fragrant, and when mixed with that of *Caraña* or *Algarroba*, forms excellent torches which burn with great brilliancy, and emit a delicious odor. The bark is also remarkable as affording a material similar to that employed by the North American Indians in the construction of their canoes, and used similarly by their brethren of the Orinoco for their light pirogues. With this object the Indian separates the bark without breaking, and cutting it of the required dimensions, proceeds to join the extremities by means of *bejucos* or slender vines, filling the interstices with a little moist clay to throw off the water; the whole is then well bound with stronger vines, and a couple or more sticks are affixed between the borders of the pirogue to prevent its collapsing when launched into the broad stream.

CHAPTER III.

THE LLANOS.

We left Ortiz as usual, very early the next morning, stumbling here and there amidst the mass of loose stones which paved the way all along the winding bed of the *quebrada*. In proportion as we advanced on our route, the hills decreased in size, while the loose stones seemed to increase in quantity. The splendid groves of hardy and balsamiferous trees, which near Ortiz formed an almost impenetrable forest, gradually became less imposing in appearance, until they were replaced by thickets of thorny bushes, chiefly composed of several species of mimosas, with a delicate and feathery foliage. The traveller accustomed to the shade of a luxuriant vegetation, and to the sight of cultivated valleys, is struck by the rapid diminution of the former, and the total disappearance of the latter, as he emerges from the Galeras of Ortiz: yet he is somewhat compensated by the almost overpowering *perfume* shed by masses of the canary-colored blossoms with which these shrubs are loaded, from the

summits down to the bending branches that trail the ground at every passing breeze.

Suddenly we entered a widely-extended tract of level land almost destitute of vegetation. With the exception of a few clumps of palm-trees with fan-like leaves, nothing but short grass covered its entire surface, almost realizing the idea of "an ocean covered with sea-weed." A dense mass of vapor pervading the atmosphere obscured the horizon, while the fan-palms, seen from afar, appeared like ships enveloped in a fog. Gradually the circle of the heavens seemed to close around us, until we became, as it were, encompassed by the sky. We were, in fact, treading the shores of the great basin of the Llanos, over one of the ancient shoals or *Mesas*, which, like successive terraces, now form the borders of those grassy oceans known as the Pampas. This was the Mesa de Paya, the seat of one of the cattle-farms to which we were bound.

After wandering for nearly three hours over this monotonous landscape without compass, and guided only by certain landmarks known to the *vaqueanos*, we came unexpectedly upon the borders of the Mesa, which commands an extensive view of the lower savannas. As if by magic the dreary scene changed to one of the most glorious panoramas in existence. At our feet lay a beautiful expanse of meadow, fresh and smooth as the best cultivated lawn, with troops of horses and countless herds of cattle dispersed all over the plain. Several glittering ponds, alive with all varieties of aquatic birds, reflected upon their limpid surface the broad-leaved

crowns of the fan-palms, towering above verdant groves of laurel, amyris, and elm-like *robles*. Further beyond, and as far as the eye could reach, the undulating plain appeared like a petrified ocean, after the sweeping tempest.

But I feel that my descriptions fall short of the reality, and that I am unable to depict the harmonious effects of light and shade, and the blending of the various tints of green, blue and purple, dispersed over this extensive panorama; the gentle undulations of the plain; the towering palms gracefully fanning the glowing atmosphere with their majestic crowns of broad and shining leaves; and myriad other beauties difficult to enumerate.

I could scarcely tear myself away from the spot, so fascinated was I with the novelty of the scene. My companions, more concerned for the speedy termination of the journey than the beautiful in nature, set off at a brisk trot towards the house, which was at no great distance. Fearing to lose my way among the intricate paths leading to it, I was compelled to follow in their wake, stopping occasionally to gaze once more upon those enchanting groves, which seemed to return me to the highly cultivated fields and green meadows of glorious "Old England," from whence I had just returned.

On descending to the plain below, my attention was attracted to an unsightly group of palm-thatched huts, looking more like huge bee-hives than the abode of human beings. A formidable fence of palm trunks surrounded the premises, and several acres of ground beyond. These were the *corrals*, or enclosures

where the training of the fierce herds was practised by the hardy dwellers of the Llanos; but no signs of cultivation, or aught else connected with the rural occupations of the farmer, were visible in the neighborhood. Presently the cavalcade stopped before the gate, and all the individuals composing it dismounted and began to unsaddle their horses amidst the barking of a legion of dogs, and the braying of all the donkeys in the vicinity.

This was the *hato* or cattle-farm of San Pablo we were in quest of, famous in the annals of the civil wars in Venezuela, as the occasional head-quarters of the constitutional armies, commanded by the owner of this farm. Our leader was received at the entrance of his estate, by a grave and elderly negro slave, who acted as overseer, and had under his control all the men and property attached to it. Kneeling upon the stony court-yard, he kissed the hand extended to him in friendly greeting, after which he proceeded to unsaddle his master's horse, which he led to a pond within the enclosure, where the horses were watered.

We purposed remaining a few days at San Pablo, with the object of incorporating some fresh relays of mules and horses from the abundant stock of this estate: so we of the staff installed ourselves under the palm-roof of our rustic mansion, while the rank and file of the expedition found accommodation in the open barracoons adjoining it; although none of the party had reason to boast of being better off than their neighbor.

"It is sad when pleasing first impressions are obliterated," remarks a sentimental writer; "always

painful to become *desenchanté* on a more intimate acquaintance with either people or places." I soon found that I was not in the fairy land I had imagined, abounding in grottos and refreshed by sparkling fountains, but in the region of the Llanos where the French adage, *chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous*, is verified to its fullest extent. San Pablo, with its vaunted prestige, and in spite of its proximity to several important marts, was no better provided with accommodations than the untidy douar of the wandering Arab of the Desert. A rickety table standing against the wall for fear of tumbling down, two or three clumsy cedar chairs covered with raw-hide, and a couple of grass hammocks, serving the double purpose of beds and lounges, constituted all the furniture of the great farm. As a substitute for wardrobes and hat-stands, we were shown a number of deer-antlers and bull-horns imbedded in the walls of reeds and mud, on which to hang our pouches, bridles, &c. I searched in vain, on our arrival, for something like a bowl in which to lave my hands and face, covered with dust and parched by the broiling sun of the savannas. Even water was so scarce that it was served to us sparingly from a large calabash gourd used in bringing it from the river, nearly a mile distant. It is true there was, within the enclosure of the houses, a pond or excavation, made while searching for the remains of a brave officer who fell fighting for his country's freedom. Sufficient water had accumulated there during the rainy season to entitle it to the name of *Laguna*, or Lake of Genaro Vazquez, the name of the afore-mentioned hero; but it was so filled with

Bavas—a small species of alligator,—terrapins, and toads, as to render the water undrinkable.

But to return to our head-quarters, the structure of which struck me so forcibly at first as a bee-hive of vast proportions, naturally suggesting the idea of a "land of milk and honey." Unfortunately neither of these could be obtained either for love or money, although the woods and pastures of the estate abounded in both the creatures that produced them. So we were compelled to resort to our reserved stock of *papelon* to sweeten our coffee, and to its own delicious natural aroma in the place of milk. As to the house itself, it only differed from the rest in that region in being larger, and perhaps in better order than are the generality. Imagine a pyramidal structure, thatched with palm leaves, the roof slanting to within a few feet of the ground, and supported on stout posts of live timber, which served also as framework for the walls, and you will have some idea of the style of architecture peculiar to the country. Doors and windows are of no account in a country uniformly warm throughout the year, and where the inhabitants possess few articles capable of tempting the cupidity of light-fingered gentry. Therefore, an ox-hide stretched across the openings left in the walls to admit light and the inmates, is all that is required to keep off uninvited guests. As an exception to this rule, our mansion of San Pablo had one or two rooms set apart for invalids, provided with doors and windows of solid planks of timber in the rough; the other apartments had the upper half of the walls purposely left open, to admit full and free entrance of light and air. A

narrow piazza or corridor, formed by the slanting of the roof to within five feet of the ground, ran along the entire length of the main building, and was intended more as a protection to the rooms against the sun and rains, than as a resort for the inmates.

The first step, on arriving, was to secure a place in the open reception room, for my own chattels and hammock, before all the spare posts and hooks had been appropriated by my companions. This accomplished, I proceeded to a thorough examination of my saddle and its accoutrements, so as to have them adapted to the peculiar mode of travelling in the Llanos. This care I left to the good judgment of our attendants, not being myself sufficiently skilled in the art of mending, greasing, and putting in order the complicated gear of our riding equipment. In the same predicament were also my two English companions, and our worthy doctor; a kind word, however, addressed to the good-natured Llaneros—especially if accompanied with a drop of aguardiente—never failed of enlisting their services in our favor.

Habit, as well as necessity, is sometimes the mother of invention, as my experience soon taught me that, to get along in my new quarters, it would be requisite to set aside the airs and insignia of civilization. Divesting myself, therefore, of all such superfluities as coat, cravat, pants, and shoes, I adopted the less cumbrous attire of the Llaneros, consisting mainly of breeches tightly buttoned at the knee, and a loose shirt, usually of a bright checkered pattern. Shoes are altogether dispensed with in a country like the Llanos, subject to drenching rains, and covered with

mud during a great portion of the year, besides the inconvenience they offer to the rider in holding the stirrup securely when in chase of wild animals. The leg, however, is well protected from the thorns and cutting grass of the savannas by a neat legging or *botin*, made of buffskin, tightly buttoned down the calf by knobs or studs of highly polished silver. Another characteristic article of dress, and one in which the wearers take great pride, is the linen checkered handkerchief, loosely worn around the head. Its object is ostensibly to protect it from the intensity of the sun's rays; but the constant habit of wearing it has rendered the handkerchief as indispensable a headdress to the Llaneros as is the cravat to the neck of the city gentleman.

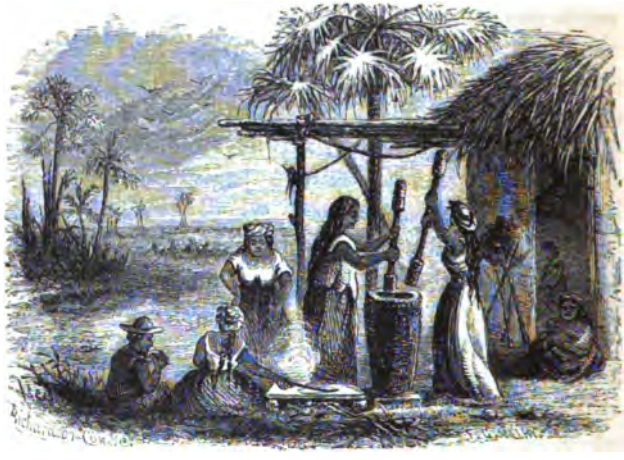
One angle of the building was devoted to the kitchen, and rooms for the overseer and his family; the other was set apart for a store-room, suggesting hidden treasures of good things for the comfort of the inner man. Being naturally inquisitive, I lost no time in investigating the contents of the *bodega;* but instead of sweetmeats, fresh cheese, or even bread and butter,—articles of easy manufacture in the Llanos, on which I had feasted my imagination,—I found the place filled with roaches, pack-saddles, old bridles, lazos, and *tasajo* or jerked beef. This last is prepared by cutting fresh beef into long strips, and exposing them to dry in the sun, first rubbing them thoroughly with salt. Animal substances spoil so readily in tropical climates, that unless this precaution is taken immediately after a bullock is slaughtered, the meat becomes tainted in a short time. Two

or three days' exposure to the hot sun of the Llanos, is *sufficient* to render the beef as dry and tough as leather; in this state, it may be stored away for six months without spoiling. The older the better; age imparting to it that peculiar rank flavor which makes *tasajo* so highly prized by people of all ranks in Cuba and other West India Islands. Large shipments of this beef have been made from Venezuela to those places; but the competition of Buenos Ayres has reduced of late the profits arising from this branch of our exports. The manner of killing and quartering an animal in the Llanos deserves particular mention. The cattle being usually some distance from the house, two horsemen are despatched after the victim; one of them gallops close to the animal's rear, and throwing his unerring lazo at its head, drags it along, while his companion urges it on by means of his *garrocha* or goad, until they reach the sacrificial post: one or two turns of the lazo around this, bring the animal close to the *botalon;* the matador then plunges the point of his dagger into the vertebræ back of the head, and the struggling beast drops as if struck by an electric spark; a second thrust of the bloody dagger into his throat severs the artery, and the blood gushes in torrents through the wound from every part of his body. The prostrate victim is now turned upon its back, and a long incision made lengthwise of the belly, preparatory to flaying and cutting up the carcass. When the animal is not intended to be immediately slaughtered, he is tied to the post by a succession of coils from the lazo around his horns, and left there until the fatal moment comes to despatch him.

One night I was awakened by a terrific bellowing proceeding from the *botalon;* but, as I knew there was no bullock there for slaughter at the moment, I was at a loss how to account for this uproarious serenade. Curiosity led me to inquire into the cause, and directing my steps towards the spot, I beheld a group of about a dozen bulls, smelling at the blood of their former companions, and ploughing up the gore with their hoofs, evidently in great distress. This continued for some time, until, finding their bewailing by moonlight rather too touching even for artists' ears, we ordered them to be driven away, in spite of the sublimity of the scene. I had other opportunities of witnessing similar testimonials of respect, whenever a herd of cattle approached the place of execution, which never failed to impress me deeply with a feeling of compassion for their sorrows.

Every morning an animal was slaughtered for us. Our meals consisted of roast beef, without either vegetables or wheaten bread. Indian corn we had in abundance, both in the grain and in the husk; but before it could be converted into *arepas*—the favorite bread of the country—it required to be passed through a variety of operations each day, which made the process rather tedious, as the grain must first be hulled by pounding it in large wooden mortars, adding a handful of sand and a little water: next the grain must be separated from the chaff, thoroughly washed, and then boiled over a slow fire. In doing this, care must be used, for if too soft it will not answer the purpose. Finally it is ground to a paste between two stones, formed into flat cakes, and baked in shallow pans of

earthenware. The result of all this labor is bread exceedingly white and nourishing; but it has the disadvantage of becoming tough and unpalatable when cold. Under the popular name of *tortillas*, this bread is also extensively used in Mexico and Central America, although inferior to our own.



Even this was considered a great luxury at San Pablo, few other cattle-farms being provided with the necessary utensils for its manufacture, and still fewer the number of those that will grow sufficient corn for the consumption of their inmates. The Llaneros are essentially a pastoral people, and trouble themselves but little with the cultivation of the land, considering it rather derogatory to bend their heads, even to mother Earth. Hence their homes are usually in a state of utter wretchedness, being unprovided even

with the commonest necessaries. Although the land is extremely fertile, and would well repay the labor with abundant crops of every kind of grain, they do not consider bread an essential, using instead a piece of boiled liver, which in their estimation answers just as well. Therefore the divine command, which enjoins us to earn our daily bread by the sweat of the brow, is not much regarded by them. In the midst of countless herds, and surrounded with the most munificent gifts of a bountiful Providence, they are often even without fresh meat; not because they are sparing of their cattle, which in that country bears a nominal value, but because they are naturally abstemious; and as for milk and butter, they despise both as food only fit for children. Cheese, however, is a favorite article of food with them, and in its preparation, they display considerable ability, especially the delicious kind termed *queso de manos*, a species of boiled cheese. As some of my readers may wish to experiment in making it, I will give them the recipe. Curd the milk in the usual way, and boil the curd in its own whey. When about the consistency of molasses candy, stretch it out repeatedly with the hands until cold. Add a little salt to the mass; roll it into flat cakes, and hang the cheese to drain in nets suspended from the ceiling. When pulled, it will separate in layers which look like parchment, retaining all the flavor of the milk.

The cows, being half wild in most cases, require to be milked by main force. To accomplish this, one of the dairymen throws a noose around the horns of the animal, and holds it secure by means of a long

pole attached to the thong, while another proceeds to milk it in the usual way; but none will yield a drop, unless the calf is first allowed to suck a little, and then tied to the mother's knee.

Every cow is distinguished by a fancy name, such as Clavellina, Flor del Campo, Marabilla, and others equally euphonious and poetical. When called to be milked, the tame ones immediately answer in suppressed bellowings, and come forward of their own accord, while the calves confined in the pen, on hearing their mothers' names, run along the fence in search of the gate; a boy, stationed there for the purpose, lets fall one of the bars, and off they bound after the mothers.

The men perform there altogether the occupations allotted to women in other countries, such as milking the cows, curding the milk, and turning out the cheese when ready. They do not even disdain cooking their own food, and washing their own garments, when occasion requires. Of the women, I may be permitted to quote here what Sir Francis Head, in his quaint style, says with reference to those in the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, as being equally applicable to their sisters of the Llanos: "The habits of the women are very curious: they have literally nothing to do, the great plains which surround them offer no motive to work, they seldom ride, and *their* lives certainly are very indolent and inactive. They all have families, however, whether married or not; and once when I inquired of a young woman employed in nursing a very pretty child, who was the father of the 'criatura,' she replied 'Quien sabe?'" *

* Journeys across the Pampas.

But it is time to introduce my reader to a more intimate acquaintance with this singular race of people, whose manliness, bravery, and skill in waging a constant war, not only with the wild animals of the field, but against the proud legions of Iberia, entitle them to a place among the heroes of the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LLANEROS.

"Dichoso aquel que alcanza
Como rico don del Cielo,
Para defender su suelo
Buen caballo y buena lanza."
—AROLAS.

THE people inhabiting the vast region of the Llanos, although claiming descent from the old Castilian race, once the rulers of the land, are, in fact, an amalgamation of the various castes composing the present population of the Republic. These are, the whites, or the descendants of the European settlers of the country; the aboriginals or Indians, and a great proportion of blacks. In most of the towns the native whites preponderate over all others, and represent the wealth, as well as the most respectable portion of the community; in the villages and thinly populated districts of the plains, a mongrel breed resulting from the admixture of these three, constitute the majority of the inhabitants. These are dispersed over an area of 27,000 square miles, making a proportion

of only fourteen individuals, out of a population of 390,000, to every square mile.

This race, although vastly inferior to the first in mental capacity and moral worth, is endowed with a physique admirably adapted to endure the fatigues of a life beset with dangers and hardships.* Cast upon a wild and apparently interminable plain, the domain of savage beasts and poisonous reptiles, their lot has been to pass all their life in a perpetual struggle, not only with the primitive possessors of the land, but with the elements themselves, often as fierce as they are grand. When it is not the alarm of the dreaded viper or the spotted jaguar, it is the sudden inroad of vast inundations, which, spreading with fearful rapidity over the land, sweep off in one moment their frail habitations and their herds. Nevertheless, this insecure existence, this continual

* Mons. de Lavayesse, in his interesting work on Venezuela, makes some pertinent remarks on this subject worthy of the consideration and study of learned physiologists. "Why is it," he says, "that individuals proceeding from a mixture of African and indigenous American blood, have greater strength, finer forms, more intellectual faculties and moral energy, than the Negro or Indian? Why, although the white be, in general, superior in strength of body, mental powers, and in moral force, to the aboriginal American and to the negro—why, I ask, are the individuals born of the union of a white with an Indian woman, (the Mestizos, for instance,) inferior in mental and corporeal qualities to the Zambos? Why are the Mestizos generally distinguished by finer figures, agreeable countenances, and in mildness and docility of their dispositions? Why is the mulatto, son of a white and a negress, superior to the Zambo in intellectual faculties, but his inferior in physical? Why is it, that when those races are mixed, their progeny is remarkable for a more healthy and vigorous constitution, and for more vital energy, than the individuals born in the same climate of indigenous European or African blood, without mixture?"

strugg.e between life and death, between rude intellect and matter, has for the Llanero a sort of fascination, perhaps not so well understood by people possessing the blessings and ideas of civilization, but without which he could not exist, especially if deprived of his horse and cast among the mountain region north of his cherished plains. The Modern Centaur of the desolate regions of the New World, the Llanero spends his life on horseback; all his actions and exertions must be assisted by his horse; for him the noblest effort of man is, when gliding swiftly over the boundless plain and bending over his spirited charger, he overturns an enemy or masters a wild bull. The following lines of Victor Hugo seem as though copied from this model: "He would not fight but on horseback; he forms but one person with his horse; he lives on horseback; trades, buys, and sells on horseback; eats, drinks, sleeps, and dreams on horseback." Like the Arab, he considers his horse his best and most reliable friend on earth, often depriving himself of rest and comfort after a hard day's journey to afford his faithful companion abundance of food and water. It is not at all surprising, therefore, to hear the bard—all Llaneros are poets more or less—exclaim, after the loss of both his wife and valued horse:

Mi muger y mi caballo
Se me murieron á un tiempo;
Que muger, ni que demonio,
Mi caballo es lo que siento.

My wife and my valued horse
Died both at the same time;
To the devil with my wife,
For my horse do I repine.

Few people in the world are better riders than the Llaneros of Venezuela, if we except perhaps the Gauchos of Buenos Ayres, or equal to either in the dexterity they display in the wonderful feats of horsemanship to which their occupations in the field inure them from childhood. Their horses, moreover, are so well trained to the various evolutions of their profession, that animal and rider seem to possess but one existence.

The life of the Llanero, like that of the Gaucho his prototype, is singularly interesting, and resembles in many respects that of others who, like them, have their abode in the midst of extensive plains. Thus they have been aptly styled the Cossacks and the Arabs of the New World, with both of whom they have many points in common, but more especially do they resemble the last named. When visiting the famous Constantine Gallery of paintings at Versailles, I was struck with the resemblance of the Algerine heroes of Horace Vernet with our own, revealing at once the Moorish descent of the latter, independently of other characteristic peculiarities.

The inimitable author of "Journeys Across The Pampas," already quoted, alluding to the life of these wild shepherds of the plains, compares it very appropriately to the rise and progress of a young eagle, so beautifully described by Horace in the following verses:

> Olim juventas et patrius vigor
> Nidum laborum propulit inscium;
> Vernique, jam nimbis remotis,
> Insolitos docuere nisus

Venti paventem; mox in ovilia
Demisit hostem vividus impetus;
Nunc in reluctantes dracones
Egit amor dapis atque pugnæ.

—HORACE, Book iv., Ode iv.

"Whom native vigor, and the rush
Of youth have spurr'd to quit the nest,
And skies of blue, in springtide's flush,
Entice aloft to breast
The gales he fear'd before his lordly plumes were drest.

"Now swooping, eager for his prey,
Spreads havoc through the flutter'd fold;
Straight, fired by love of food and fray,
In grapple fierce and bold,
The struggling dragons rends, e'en in their rocky hold."

—TRANSLATION BY MARTIN.

"Born in the rude hut, the infant Gaucho receives little attention, but is left to swing from the roof in a bullock's hide, the corners of which are drawn towards each other by four strips of hide. In the first year of his life he crawls about without clothes, and I have more than once seen a mother give a child of this age a sharp knife, a foot long, to play with. As soon as he walks, his infantine amusements are those which prepare him for the occupations of his future life; with a lazo made of twine he tries to catch little birds, or the dogs, as they walk in and out of the hut. By the time he is four years old he is on horseback, and immediately becomes useful by assisting to drive the cattle into the corral."

When sufficiently strong to cope with a wild ani-

mal, the young Llanero is taken to the *majada* or great cattle-pen, and there hoisted upon the bare back of a fierce young bull. With his face turned towards the animal's tail, which he holds in lieu of bridle, and his little legs twisted around the neck of his antagonist, he is whirled round and round at a furious rate. His position, as may be imagined, is any thing but equestrian; yet, the fear of coming in contact with the bull's horns compels the rider to hold on until, by a dexterous twist of the animal's tail while he jumps off its back, he succeeds in overturning his antagonist.

In proportion as he grows older and stronger, a more manly amusement is afforded him with the breaking in of a wild colt. This being, however, a more dangerous experiment, in which many a "young eagle" is rendered a "lame duck," he is provided with the necessary accoutrements to withstand the terrible struggle with the animal. Firmly seated upon his back and brandishing overhead a tough *chaparro* vine for a whip, the apprentice is thus installed in his new office, from which he must not descend until the brute is perfectly subdued; the coil of lazo in the hands of his merciless instructor would be the least evil awaiting him should he otherwise escape safe and sound from the desperate kicks and plunges of the horse.

Here commences what we may term, the public life of the Llanero; his education is now considered complete. From this moment all his endeavors and ambition will be to rival his companions in the display of physical force, which he shows to an admi-

rable degree when, armed with his tough lazo, he pursues the wild animals of his domain. If a powerful bull or wild horse tries to escape into the open plain, the cavalier unfurls the noose which is always ready by his side, and the fugitive is quickly brought back to the corral. Should the thong give way under the impetuous flight of the animal, the rider seizes him by the tail, and whirling round suddenly, pulls towards him with so much force as to cause his immediate overthrow.

In all these exercises the roving cavalier of the Llanos acquires that feeling of security and enduring disposition for which he is famous. Unfortunately, it is often turned to account in disturbing the balance of power among his more enlightened countrymen; for he is always ready to join the first revolutionary movement offering him the best chances for equipping himself with arms of all descriptions. Next to the horse, the Llanero esteems those weapons which give him a superiority over his fellow-creatures, viz., a lance, a blunderbuss, and a fine sword. If he is unprovided with either of these, he considers himself a miserable and degraded being, and all his efforts will tend to gratify this favorite vanity, even at the risk of his own life. Therefore he goes to war, because he is sure, if victorious, of finding the battle-field covered with these tempting trophies of his ambition. In this, unfortunately, he is too often encouraged by a host of unprincipled politicians who, not wishing to earn a livelihood by fair means, are eternally plotting against the powers that be.

The style of sword worn by the Llaneros differs

little from that used by Spaniards of the middle ages, the hilt being surmounted by a guard in the shape of a reversed cup, affording an excellent protection to the hand that wields it, while the blade is made with two edges, instead of one. Most of these swords are mounted in silver, the same as the accompanying dagger, another of their favorite weapons; and such is the passion among Llaneros for glittering swords and daggers, that they would sooner dispense with a house or a corral, than with either of these expensive commodities.

The lance comes next in importance, and in their hands is quite a formidable weapon, which they are enabled to handle with great dexterity, from their constant practice with the *garrocha* or goad with which they drive and turn the cattle. As an element of war, the lance has become celebrated in the country, having rendered the cause of Independence the most effectual service in repelling the attacks of the sanguinary hosts sent by Spain against the indomitable "Rebeldes" of Colombia.

The *trabuco* or blunderbuss, too, is held in great estimation as a weapon of defence, or rather of aggression, as they are at all times ready to test its powers on the slightest provocation; and nobody thinks of travelling in that desert country without one of these wide-mouthed spitfires by his side.

Being rather of a superstitious turn of mind, these people believe that by decorating their deadly weapons with some insignia of their religion, they are rendered more effectual; the cross surmounts their swords and daggers; while the rosary and *agnus Dei*

entwine the butt-end of their *trabucos*, when called into requisition. Thus they are emboldened to perform acts of desperate valor which, under any other circumstances, would be considered rash in the extreme.

Such is the religious faith of these benighted people; a religion of form and superstition rather than conviction. Christianity, like the Spanish language, exists among them, it is true; but corrupted and enveloped in dark superstition, almost bordering on idolatry. It cannot, however, be expected that a widely scattered population over so extensive an area of desert plains, should possess any means of enlightenment beyond what is conveyed to them through the few teachers distributed among the principal towns of the interior. Therefore it is not an unusual thing to meet with persons owning extensive cattle farms, and even holding important commissions in the army, who cannot read or write. During the good old times of the Capuchin Missions, the youth of the villages under their control received at their hands a scanty education, principally in the primary notions of the catechism; but with the destruction of those beneficent establishments, during the protracted struggle between natives and Spaniards, they were replunged into utter ignorance, and most of their places of worship have long since gone to decay. They have retained, nevertheless, enough of the extravagant notions of that school to establish a creed singularly at variance with the teachings of the Gospel, and founded principally on a belief in saints and amulets. The latter consist in little trinkets wrought

in gold or silver; or written orisons carefully preserved in leathern bags and worn suspended from their rosaries around their necks. Most of these orisons are the more extravagant from the fact they have no meaning whatever; yet this very obscurity seems to attach greater value to them, their principal charm consisting, as they say, in their mysterious import.

Great faith is also placed in certain prayers which are supposed to have the power of driving away the Devil, curing diseases and averting all kinds of evil.

As regards their Creator, they only have some vague ideas; they believe, for instance, in one God; *mais voila tout.* They seem to entertain greater fear of Beelzebub and Death personified, both of whom they imagine to possess undisputed sway over His creatures. The first they fancy to be fashioned with horns, hoofs, and claws like some of their wild beasts. Their ideas of death are no less extravagant. A respectable old gentleman of my acquaintance who once found himself very low with fever, thus related his experience respecting this fearful vision. "Why!" said he to a circle of friends who came to congratulate him on his recovery, "I had always supposed that Death was actually a horrid skeleton skulking about the world in search of victims, and carrying in his hand a fearful hook with which he angled for us as we do for fish. No such thing, my friends, I assure you; Death, after all, is nothing more than lack of breath;" accompanying the assertion with a gentle pressure of his nose with his fingers and a hearty laugh.

As a natural consequence, the Llaneros, in spite

of their bravery and *sang froid* in other respects, entertain great fear of *espantos* or ghosts and apparitions. One of the most popular hallucinations of this kind is *la bola de fuego*, or "light of Aguirre the Tyrant," as the natives usually style it—a sort of *ignis fatuus*, arising from the decomposition of organic substances at the bottom of certain marshes. Superstitious imaginations, unacquainted with this phenomenon, readily transform these gaseous exhalations into the soul of the famous Lope de Aguirre wandering about the savannas. This adventurous individual had the satisfaction, while he lived, of discovering the great river Amazon. Being of a restless and bloody disposition, like all the heroes of that epoch, he started in search of El Dorado with a powerful expedition from Peru, which resulted in the discovery of the Father of Waters. He stained his laurels, however, with the blood of his own daughter, as well as with that of his companions, for which unpardonable atrocities it is believed his accursed soul was left to wander over those countries which he sullied with his crimes.* Now it appears before the terrified traveller in the form of a blazing ball of fire; a minute after it will be seen one or two miles off. If sufficiently near, the spectator cannot fail to observe the entrails of the wicked wanderer enveloped in the flames of this extraordinary apparition. Such is the power of affrighted imaginations which have converted one of the commonest phenomena of chemical action into the wildest speculation of besotted fanaticism.

* See Humboldt, Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America.

With regard to miracles and the interposition of the saints, the names of some of which are constantly in their mouths, the Llaneros also have many curious notions. For every emergency of their lives there is a special patron saint; San Pablo, like good old St. Patrick, is supposed to have entire sway over snakes and other vermin; San Antonio, the power of restoring stolen goods to their rightful owners; while San somebody else that of befriending the highway robber and assassin from the punishment of justice and violent death. As an illustration of this fact, I will relate here an incident which I witnessed during one of those endemic revolutions so typical of the Spanish American republics, and which never fail to foster lawless bands of desperadoes who, under the cover of political reforms, commit all sorts of depredations upon the helpless inhabitants.

JOSE URBANO, THE GUERILLA-CHIEF.

A digression for the sake of variety.

Shortly after our return from the Apure, a revolution broke out among the colored population; a class which until then had been the most peaceful and submissive, but since perverted to such a degree as to require all the energies and resources of the white race to save itself from utter ruin and degradation.

An ambitious demagogue, editor of a newspaper in the capital, had been seized with the mania, so

prevalent in South America, of becoming President (*pro tem.*) of the Republic. To this end, he spared no means in recommending himself to the public, through the columns of his paper, heaping at the same time all kinds of slander and abuse upon those who stood in his way. Finding, however, little coöperation from the better class of the community, he experienced no scruple in courting the favor of the colored population, who, he readily persuaded, "had a perfect right to share in the gains and property of their aristocratic masters." The Government was powerless in arresting the spirit of revolt which was daily being infused among the masses, as the Constitution allowed perfect freedom of the press, and the good citizens did not care to take the matter into their own hands. The consequence was, a fearful outbreak among the lower classes, backed by all the *tramposos* or broken-down speculators of the country, proclaiming community of property, and the ci-devant editor (who, by the way, had not a *sous* to stake in it) candidate for the next Presidency of the Republic. The revolt soon spread to the Llaneros, by far the most to be feared in the matter of hard blows; and although it was quelled in time through the efforts of General Paez, it sowed the seeds of discontent which have since brought forth to the country an abundant crop of revenge, violence, and rapine. It was during that campaign the incident I am about to relate occurred in the savannas of San Pablo.

We had just encamped for the night on the beautiful plain of Morrocoyes, not far from our place, when a messenger arrived to apprise the General that

the famous José Urbano, leader of a band of robbers who had committed several wanton murders in that neighborhood, had crossed over to San Pablo under cover of night. The General immediately despatched a dozen of his men after the banditti, with positive orders to follow up the *rastro* or trail to the world's end if necessary, and not return to his presence without the body of the leader, *muerto ó vivo*, dead or alive. To any other set of men less accustomed to the wild pursuits of the Llanos, this would have appeared an impossibility in a country like San Pablo, traversed in all directions by numerous cross-ways made by the cattle; but the instinct of those men in tracking runaways as well as stray animals, is truly wonderful. Although the plain was covered with the footprints of twenty thousand animals roaming wild over the savannas, they followed close on the heels of the banditti, until they fell in, unfortunately, with another trail left by some *vaqueros*. The night was very dark, and they easily mistook this for that of the enemy. As a matter of course it led them to a ranch where the unlucky *vaqueros* were amusing themselves at the game of monte. Without stopping to ascertain who the gamblers were, the troop charged in the midst of them, killing two or three innocent fellows, and dispersing the rest like a herd of wild sheep. The aggressors did not discover their mistake until one of the fugitives, who happened to be acquainted with the party, recognized the voice of the commander, and shouted to him to stop the carnage.

After this unfortunate encounter, it may be easy to conceive that the troopers were not slow in retrac-

ing their steps in search of the cause of their mistake; this time, however, with more prudence, carefully examining every trail until they found the right one. It led them to another ranch where Urbano was spending the evening in the society of one of his numerous sweethearts. Here they all dismounted very quietly, and leaving the horses in charge of two companions, they rushed into the ranch with a wild shout and lance in hand. The attack was so sudden, that most of the banditti were either killed or dispersed before they had time to seize their arms. Only their gallant leader stood at bay against tremendous odds, defending himself bravely for a long time with the assistance of his equally courageous sweetheart, who kept all the while urging him on like a tigress.

Overpowered at last by a superior force, and faint with the loss of blood from numerous wounds, the bandit fell at the feet of his sable Amazon. When raised, an amulet was found between his teeth so firmly held, that it required the united efforts of two men to remove it. On being opened, it was found to contain a written orison, shrouded in such mysterious language as would have defied the skill of a magician to decipher. This, I was informed, was the famous *Oracion del Justo Juez*, a singular misnomer for a talisman intended to befriend these *gente non sancta* in their marauding expeditions.

It was a lucky thing for the assailants that Urbano received at the outset a severe cut on his right arm, causing an immediate flow of blood which filled the pan of his *trabuco*, otherwise the affair would have terminated very differently. The ignition of the pow-

der was thus prevented just as he was in the act of discharging the contents of that engine of destruction amidst the group.

The body of the culprit was now tied on the back of a horse and conveyed to the presence of the General, as an atonement for the unfortunate mistake which had deprived him of the services of two or three valuable hands.

The news of this adventure spread as if by magic over the surrounding country and brought together great numbers of *curiosos*, among them, no doubt, many of Urbano's adherents, who might have discredited the statement. The General improved the opportunity to address them an impressive homily, ordering at the same time the mutilated body of the renowned bandit to be exposed on the public road for twenty-four hours, as a warning to others with similar proclivities.

The death of this man, considered invulnerable by the superstitious children of the Llanos, produced a more powerful impression upon them than if a great battle had been fought and won. Next day, hundreds of *facciosos*, availing themselves of a general amnesty granted by the Commander-in-Chief to repentant revolutionists, began to arrive from various quarters and gave in their submission.

Thus ended for the time being one of the most dangerous outbreaks that had ever occurred in the country, from the nature of the principles involved. As to the originator, he was subsequently eclipsed by a bolder political aspirant, the ever-memorable José T. Monagas. This worthy, of whom more especial

mention will be made hereafter, and who, in an evil hour for his country, was called to fill the chair of State, profiting by the condition of anarchy in which the other had plunged the nation, afterwards shot down the Representatives of the people in Congress assembled, and proclaimed himself absolute ruler, thus leaving the other ambitious pretender to exclaim with the poet:

"Hos ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores."

CHAPTER V.

SCENES AT THE FISHERY.

Four days we remained at San Pablo making arrangements for the contemplated expedition to the Apure; but the horses being quartered at considerable distance, we removed to La Yegüera, a small farm within the estate exclusively devoted to the breeding of those animals. Great numbers of mules were also raised there, which made the equine stock amount to nearly three thousand animals of all ages. There, untrammelled by barriers of any kind, they roamed at will over those beautiful meadows in a semi-wild state; their only keeper was a half-breed, who with his family occupied the Ranch, which on that occasion was to shelter us also. This Ranch being too small, however, for the accommodation of the whole party, most of them bivouacked in a grove of lofty Cesalpinias and Carob trees, from whose spreading branches they slung their hammocks, the dense foliage forming a sufficient shelter from the heavy dews of night and the heat of the sun by day.

Our Leader, the Doctor, and myself, were domi-

ciled at the Ranch. Having the full range of the neighboring groves during the day, we had then no occasion to use our single apartment, already partially occupied with the culinary utensils and other wares of the family. But on retiring to our hammocks at night, the scene presented was rather ludicrous. In the same room allotted to us slept the keeper, his wife, and their numerous progeny, with all the dogs and chickens of the household huddled together in the most familiar manner. Notwithstanding, I will confess that the arrangement was not altogether disagreeable to me, as in close propinquity slept two of the prettiest damsels I had yet encountered in that region, with eyes brilliant enough to render other light superfluous. The only important hindrance to my nightly repose was the occasional flapping of wings and the hourly crowing of our host's favorite gamecock, tied directly under my hammock, and who served for clock and night-watchman to the establishment.

Agapito, our host, had an easy time as overseer of this domain, his only occupation being from time to time to scour the savannas in search of young foals which might have been attacked by the *gusano*. This is the larvæ of a species of fly deposited in the umbilical cord of the new born, and which, if not promptly removed, will eat into the very vitals. It is fortunately not difficult to destroy them by the use of powdered *cebadilla*, the seed of a liliaceous plant (Veratrum cebadilla) abounding in veratrine. For this purpose, the keeper is always provided with a horn filled with the poisonous drug, and a wooden spatula.

With the latter he digs out the worms and fills the wound with the powder to prevent a renewal of their attacks.

Groves and meadows unequalled for their luxuriance and natural beauty surrounded us on all sides, while numerous springs and rivulets, issuing from the foot of the terrace-like *Mesas*, rushed down the declivity of the plain, increasing the volume of the beautiful Guárico on whose banks stood the primitive abode of our unsophisticated host. This river is justly celebrated for the abundance and superiority of its fish; so, without delay, providing myself with hook and line, I proceeded thither, being anxious to procure specimens for my sketch-book, and also a substitute for our daily fare of beef. But, strange to relate, each time I dropped hook in the water, it was carried away in some mysterious manner, without the least motion being imparted to the float. My tackle, which I had brought from England, although arranged for fly-fishing, was capable of bearing a fish of many pounds weight; but as I soon lost all my stock in hand in the vain endeavor to secure my specimens, I gave up in disgust and returned to the Ranch that the mystery might, if possible, be explained. On seeing my slender lines, mine host with a broad grin facetiously remarked that they were good to play at fishing with, the only drawback to the amusement being that the *caribe*, a fish not larger than a perch, would carry off all my playthings. Impossible, said I; the lines are strong enough to lift you out of the water if necessary; to this he quietly replied, directing my attention to a mutilated finger of his right

hand, "Do you see this? well, not long ago I was washing my hands in the river after slaughtering a calf, when a caribe darted at my finger and carried off a part before I was even aware of his approach." Here was a serious obstacle to my favorite sport, and to the pleasure that Mr. Thomas and I had anticipated in sketching the various kinds of fish peculiar to that region. Fortunately, a short distance down the river was a fishing encampment provided with all the necessary appliances for obtaining the fish in large quantities. Of these we resolved to avail ourselves; but as several others of our party were equally interested, our leader despatched a messenger to the fishermen, inviting them to come up the river with their nets, and fish in our presence. To this they readily acceded, and soon after made their appearance paddling themselves over the water in four large canoes laden, among other things, with their *chinchorros* or seines, which they at once proceeded to spread across the stream, covering a deep *charco* or pool known to contain abundance of fish. Although the river at this season was very low, owing to the usual summer drought, pools of considerable depth were left at intervals, and in these the fish sought refuge in vast numbers from the season's heat and from the eager pursuit of the fishermen, of which the latter sang, while spreading their seines, in the following lines:

Guavina le dijo á Vagre
Vámonos al caramero,
Porque ya viene el verano
Y nos coge el chinchorrero:

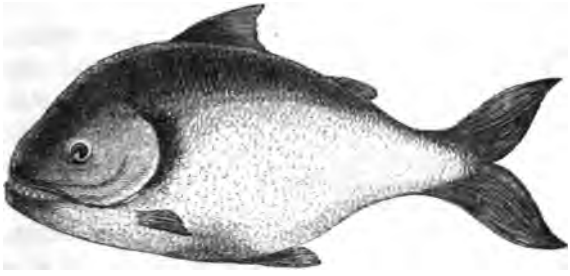
Guavina said to the Vagre,
Let us quickly seek the cover,
Till the summer's heat is over,
Lest the seine make us its prey.

As the nets were dragged towards each other, the fish could be seen by thousands moving within the space embraced by the seines. Indeed, so numerous were they, that it soon became impossible to pull them in shore without previously relieving them of a portion of their contents. Accordingly, some of the men, armed with throw-nets, harpoons, and *vicheros* —these last large hooks affixed to wooden handles— plunged into the midst of the finny multitude, and commenced an onslaught on the largest among them. Presently one of the men came out with a monstrous fellow of the catfish tribe beautifully striped like a Bengal tiger, and like him having a thick snout furnished with long barbs. This species is called the *vagre rayado* or striped catfish, and is much esteemed by people of all classes as a substitute for beef during Lent. Large quantities are salted and sent at that time to the capital and other cities, where, under the name of *pescado llanero*, it forms one of the delicacies of the season. Some of these fish attain an enormous size, measuring five, six, and even seven feet in length, and are so fat that a single one is a load for two men. There are other varieties of catfish, smaller in size, although equally rich in flavor; one of them—the *Engorda-mayordomo*—is, I conclude from its name, a special favorite with overseers.

In diving with the *vichero*, much caution was necessary on the part of the men lest they should be

hooked by their hasty companions in lieu of the fish. A more important source of anxiety to the divers, was several dangerous fish among the multitude struggling in the water, such as the Ray-fish, whose tail is furnished with a sting three inches long, with which it inflicts a very painful wound; Electric eels, whose touch alone will paralyze in an instant the muscles of the strongest man; the Payara, shaped somewhat like a sabre, and equally dangerous. The upper jaw of this last is furnished with a formidable pair of fangs, not unlike those of the rattlesnake; with these it inflicts as smooth a gash as if cut with a razor; and finally, the *caribe*, whose ravenous and bloodthirsty propensities have caused it to be likened to the cannibal tribe of Indians, once the terror of those regions, but now scattered over the towns and villages along the course of the Orinoco. Each time the nets were hauled in shore, half a dozen or more of these little pests were to be seen jumping in the crowd, their jaws wide open tearing whatever came in their way, especially the meshes of the nets, which they soon rendered useless. Their sharp triangular teeth, arranged in the same manner as those of the shark, are so strong, that neither copper, steel, nor twine can withstand them. The sight of any red substance, blood especially, seems to rouse their sanguinary appetite; and as they usually go in swarms, it is extremely dangerous for man or beast to enter the water with even a scratch upon their bodies. Horses wounded with the spur are particularly exposed to their attacks, and so rapid is the work of destruction, that unless immediate assistance is rendered, the fish

soon penetrate the abdomen of the animal and speedily reduce it to a skeleton; hence, doubtless, their appellation of *mondonguero*—tripe-eater. There are other varieties of the *caribe* in the rivers of the Llanos, but none so bold and bloodthirsty as this glutton of the waters. So abundant is this species in some rivers of the Apure, that it is a common saying among Llaneros: "there is more *caribe* than water."



Every feature of this miniature cannibal denotes the ferocity and sanguinary nature of its tastes. The piercing eye, surrounded by a bloody-looking ring, is expressive of its cruel and bloodthirsty disposition. Its under jaw, lined with a thick cartilaginous membrane which adds greatly to its strength, protrudes considerably beyond the upper, giving, as this formation of jaw does to all animals possessing it, likewise an expression of ferocity. Large spots of a brilliant orange hue cover a great portion of its body, especially the belly, fins, and tail. Toward the back, it is of a bluish ash color, with a slight tint of olive green, the intermediate spaces being of a pearly white, while

the gill-covers are tinged with red. The inhabitants being often compelled to swim across streams infested with them, entertain more fear of these little creatures than of that world-renowned monster, the crocodile. This last, although a formidable antagonist in the water, can be easily avoided and even conquered in single combat by daring men, while the former, from their diminutive size and greater numbers, can do more mischief in a short time than a legion of crocodiles.

The other kinds of caribe, although larger in size, are less dangerous than the preceding, and some even perfectly harmless. Among these, the black caribe of the Apure and Orinoco rivers is considered dainty eating. The *caribito* is also a harmless pretty little fish, with back of a fine green color, and belly white with occasional streaks of pink.

In spite, however, of all these vicious creatures, and the great depth of the water, the fishermen accomplished their work in a manner that would have done credit to the fearless pearl-divers of the ocean, more especially the swimmers, who are constantly in danger from some of the fish while gliding through the water in their pursuit. Those in the canoes were, of course, less liable to be attacked, although it often happened that a *payara*, being peculiarly adapted for darting out of the water, would clear the nets with a spring and fall in the midst of the paddlers, causing a momentary confusion among them. My attention was particularly attracted to the skill of the men in throwing their hand nets, sometimes lying on their stomach on the surface of the water, their hands encumbered with the nets; others would stand perfectly

erect, half their bodies out of water, and without any footing to serve them as *point d'appui*. In the same manner, those whose business it was to drive the fish towards the seines, managed their huge batons, and all apparently without the least inconvenience. Suddenly their labors were interrupted by a serious obstacle in the shape of a *caiman* or alligator struggling hard between the nets to regain his freedom. Here was a sufficient test of the courage and ability of the fishers. If the monster remained, he would not only endanger the nets, but also the progress of the men through the water, they being liable at any moment to come in contact with his powerful jaws. It was therefore decided to get rid of the intruder at all hazards. To accomplish this, a lazo was procured, and to the astonishment of all the *blancos* present, a man went down with it to the bottom in search of the monster, with the avowed object of lazoing him under the water. After a few moments of, to us, most anxious suspense, but which the hardy fishermen regarded as child's play, their companion rose to the surface panting for breath, not yet having ascertained the precise position of his intended victim. After inhaling sufficient air, the diver again disappeared, coming up in due time with the glad tidings that the enemy was captured, in proof whereof he handed us the other end of the lazo that we might drag him out. This was no easy task, as these reptiles, by their peculiar conformation, have immense power while under water, and it required the united efforts of all on shore to land him. This accomplished, we were perplexed in what manner to despatch him, as no steel

instrument can penetrate the thick cuirass of the *caiman*, except it be in the armpits; but so violent were his struggles, that it was impossible to strike him there. At last the Doctor, more sagacious than the rest of us in anatomical operations, plunged a harpoon into the nape of the neck. The effect was that of paralyzing at once the movements of the prisoner, after which he was easily stabbed.

The manner in which our gallant diver accomplished his daring feat was thus explained by his companions; the *caiman*, like the domestic hog, is said to delight in being scratched about the ribs,* and of this the diver perhaps availed himself in order to place the noose around his neck, being very careful to approach him from behind, as it is a well-known fact that these reptiles, owing to the nature of their collar vertebræ, cannot easily turn round. The alligator is not so dangerous as its congener the crocodile of the Orinoco and its tributaries; few real crocodiles ever ascend the Guarico as far as San Pablo. However, a case had occurred here not long before, when a man disappeared under rather mysterious circumstances, and there was good reason to surmise that his loss was due to one of these gentry. It appears that the seines, being entangled around a snag at the bottom of the river, a man was, as usual, sent to remove the obstruction; considerable time elapsing without his reappearance, his comrades, seriously alarmed, instituted a diligent search, but no vestige of the unfortunate man was ever discovered. It never oc-

* Since the above was in type, I find this fact corroborated by Sir J. Emerson Tennent in his interesting "Sketches on the NATURAL HISTORY OF CEYLON," p. 284.

curred to his friends that he might have fallen a prey to a crocodile, and the calamity was universally ascribed to the supernatural influence of some evil genii of the deep. From that time, the spot has borne the ominous name of the *Encantado* or haunted pool.

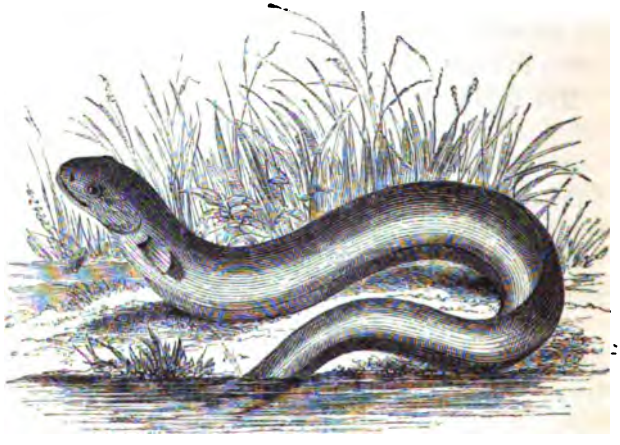
All obstructions to the progress of the nets were at length removed, and a sufficient quantity of fish having been taken therefrom, we all assisted in pulling them in, and a few moments afterwards had the satisfaction of beholding the sand banks on which we were, strewn with the proceeds of the two seines.

It would be impossible to convey an adequate idea of the singular forms and brilliant hues of most of these fish, all new to me. The *Cherna*, in particular, attracted my attention from their abundance and peculiar formation. Some attain a large size, weighing as much as a hundred pounds, and their flesh is so delicate as to deserve the appellation of river veal. The mouth is comparatively small, and set with a row of teeth bearing a strong resemblance to those of the human species.

The fishing having been solely for our amusement, and more game obtained than we required for our consumption, some was distributed among the people of the neighborhood who had collected to witness the sport, and the remainder given to the fishermen, who received besides a handsome compensation for their trouble in coming so far from their encampment.

During the distribution of the fish, a singular incident took place which illustrates at once the tenacity of life with which reptiles are endowed, and the electrical powers of that most singular creature, the

gymnotus or electric eel. A boy had discovered one of these among the heap of fish on the beach, and was dragging it along by means of a *vichero* to avoid the shocks, when the body of the eel came accidentally in contact with the carcass of the *caiman*. This last, which, after the rough treatment it had received from our medical adviser, was supposed to be quite dead, much to the surprise of all, opened his huge jaws and closed them with a loud crash. The Doctor, especially, who, from his professional knowledge in surgical operations, had pronounced it beyond recovery, was the loudest in his expressions of astonishment at this unexpected turn. It was, however, merely a convulsive movement, induced by contact with the eel, and similar to that produced on the limbs of a frog by a galvanic current; for, afterward, the reptile remained without further signs of returning life. Science will, ere long, take advantage of the electric eel.



I would here most willingly entertain my readers with an account of the nature and habits of these "animal electrical machines," had not the great Humboldt already elucidated the subject in the most comprehensive and brilliant manner. To his admirable works I will therefore refer the reader for a full and graphic description of this, one of the most curious of fish. It was in one of the numerous tributary creeks of this river, that the distinguished traveller procured the gymnoti for his experiments; perhaps from amongst the progenitors of the above mentioned. The manner in which they were obtained differed somewhat, however, from the one adopted by us on this occasion. Knowing how difficult it was to catch these eels on account of their extreme agility and powerful electrical discharges, the guides collected in the savannas a drove of wild horses, which they forced into a pool of water abounding in gymnoti. "The extraordinary noise caused by the horses' hoofs makes the fish issue from the mud and excites them to attack. The yellowish and livid eels, resembling large aquatic serpents, swim on the surface of the water and crowd under the bellies of the horses and mules. A contest between animals of so different an organization presents a very striking spectacle. The Indians, provided with harpoons and long slender reeds, surround the pool closely, and some climb up the trees, the branches of which extend horizontally over the surface of the water. By their wild cries, and the length of their reeds, they prevent the horses from running away and reaching the bank of the pool. The eels, stunned by the noise, defend them-

selves by the repeated discharge of their electric batteries. For a long interval they seem likely to prove victorious. Several horses sink beneath the violence of the invisible strokes which they receive from all sides in organs the most essential to life; and stunned by the force and frequency of the shocks, they disappear under water."

"I wish," adds the traveller, "that a clever artist could have depicted the most animated period of the attack; the group of Indians surrounding the pond, the horses with their manes erect and eyeballs wild with pain and fright, striving to escape from the electric storm which they had roused, and driven back by the shouts and long whips of the excited Indians; the livid yellow eels, like great water snakes, swimming near the surface and pursuing their enemy; all these objects presented a most picturesque and exciting 'ensemble.' In less than five minutes two horses were killed; the eel, being more than five feet in length, glides beneath the body of the horse and discharges the whole length of its electric organ. It attacks, at the same time, the heart, the digestive viscera, and the cœliac fold of the abdominal nerves. I thought the scene would have a tragic termination, and expected to see most of the quadrupeds killed; but the Indians assured me that the fishing would soon be finished, and that only the first attack of the gymnoti was really formidable. In fact, after the conflict had lasted a quarter of an hour, the mules and horses appeared less alarmed; they no longer erected their manes, and their eyes expressed less pain and terror. One no longer saw them struck

down in the water, and the eels, instead of swimming to the attack, retreated from their assailants and approached the shore. The Indians now began to use their missiles; and by means of the long cord attached to the harpoon, jerked the fish out of the water without receiving any shock so long as the cord was dry."

The electric eel, although much dreaded by man, is greatly esteemed by gourmands. It is necessary, however, to deprive the fish of those parts constituting the electrical apparatus, which are rather spongy and unpalatable. Its bones, administered in the form of a decoction, are said to act powerfully in cases of difficult parturition. For this object, the spine of the fish is carefully preserved suspended from the thatch roof of the huts in that region where the services of accoucheurs are totally unknown.

Among the promiscuous assemblage of fish scattered on the sand beach, ready to transfix the hand that might inadvertently touch them, were many sting-rays. This species, like its prototype the famous "Devil-fish" of the Caribbean Sea, is quite circular and flat, with a tail over a foot in length, very thick at the base and tapering towards the end. Near the middle on the upper part, it is armed with a long and sharp-pointed bone or sting, finely serrated on two sides, which the fish can raise or lay flat at will. When disturbed, the ray, by a quick movement of the tail, directs its sting towards the object, which it seldom fails to reach. The wound thus inflicted is so severe, that the whole nervous system is convulsed, the person becoming rigid and benumbed in a few

moments. Even long after the violent effects of the wound have subsided, the part affected retains a sluggish ulceration, which has in many instances baffled the skill of the best surgeons. Some creeks and lagoons of stagnant water are so infested with them, that it is almost certain destruction to venture into them. They usually frequent the shallow banks of muddy pools, where they may be seen at all times watching for prey; and, as if conscious of their powers, scarcely deign to move off when approached by man. They, also, are considered good eating, on which account they frequently fall a prey to hungry boys and vultures, who wage constant war upon them with spear and talon.

Mr. Thomas and I had plenty of occupation in sketching the various specimens before us; but the speedy approach of night compelled us to relinquish our agreeable pastime; thus many curious fish which we would have liked to preserve, had to be consigned to the frying-pan instead of to our portfolios.

In the mean time our able cook, Mónico, and half a dozen of Llanero assistants—all of whom are more or less accomplished in the art of cooking in their own peculiar style—were busily engaged throughout the afternoon preparing the spoils of the day for our supper. A fat calf was also killed in honor of the occasion, and roasted before a blazing fire under the trees. The Llaneros are quite skilled in roasting an ox or calf, which they divide in sections according to the flavor of each particular morceau. These they string upon long wooden spits, and keep them turning before the

fire until sufficiently cooked. The ribs of the animal, taken out entire, usually form the most favorite morsel; but I would recommend to future travellers in that country the *entreverado*, made up of the animal's entrails, such as the liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys, cut into pieces of convenient size and spitted; then enveloped in the fat mesenteric membrane of the animal, and cooked in its own juices.

In addition to this abundant supply of *carne asada*, we had fish in every style, smoked, broiled, *en sancocho*, (bouilli,) &c., with plenty of bread prepared by the wife and daughters of our equerry. Just as every one had eaten, as he supposed, his fill, one of our assistants made his appearance bending under the weight of a boiling caldron containing a rich bouilli of cherna heads, and urged us to partake of his humble fare. Although this was rather reversing the order of courses, we were finally prevailed upon to *taste* the soup he had prepared with so much care for us; and no sooner was the rich broth tasted by our epicurean party, than it was forthwith devoured with unimpaired appetites; but my enjoyment of the broth was somewhat spoiled by coming in contact with a row of omniverous-looking teeth, which so reminded me of a human skull, that I was constrained to throw my portion away, although I must confess that I never tasted soup superior to it.

CHAPTER VI.

WILD HORSES.

The fishing over, the main object of our expedition to La Yegüera was next attended to, namely, that of adding to our *madrina* of supernumerary horses from the abundant stock of this farm. An entire day was passed in riding through its enchanting groves and meadows, inspecting the numerous droves of mares, guarded by their proud *padrotes* or stallions. Each troop is under the control of one of these, who not only prevent their mingling with other packs, but endeavor also to appropriate all the other mares they can kidnap from their neighbors. The conquest, however, is not obtained without a determined resistance from their rightful lords, which occasions fierce combats between the rivals. When any stranger approaches, the whole troop boldly advances towards the object of their alarm, neighing, snorting, and throwing their slim and beautiful forms into the most graceful attitudes. When at the distance of a hundred paces, they all halt, and five or six scouts are detached from the main body to reconnoitre. These

approach still nearer, and stretching their necks and ears, seem, with wild glance and cautious movement, to inquire from the stranger the object of this intrusion, while, in the mean time, the stallion keeps the whole troop in readiness for retreat in case of pursuit. When this last occurs, the scouts hastily incorporate themselves with the main body, while the stallion orders the retreat as skilfully as a good general might under similar circumstances, stopping occasionally to watch the enemy's movements, but never resuming the lead until the troop is out of danger. When thus wildly coursing over the prairies in packs of one or two hundred, headed by their respective stallions, inspired, as it were, by the freedom of the plain, nothing can surpass their magnificent appearance, nor the proud air of liberty with which they snuff the passing breeze. We one day brought to the Ranch a large drove, from which we selected those required for the expedition. This occupied the men for a couple of days, as it was discovered that most of the animals were in bad condition from burrs and *garrapatas*, another destructive insect peculiar to those places, of the size and shape of a bed-bug, and very distressing to animals. It adheres with such tenacity to the skin of the poor brutes, that it requires to be pulled by hand in order to detach it; if left undisturbed, it will suck the blood until its body becomes distended to many times the natural size. It attacks all kinds of animals, but more especially horses: these last suffer in consequence, from malignant sores about their ears, which soon wither and drop off.

The horses were so wild that they had to be broken

in before they could be of any service. This operation—which might as well be termed breaking down horses, as a great number are ruined by it—affords the Llaneros a fine opportunity for testing their ability in coping with this, the most spirited animal in the world. It is also undoubtedly one of the most difficult performances on cattle-farms, requiring strong nerve and great skill on the part of the rider to withstand the kicks and plunges of the animal and retain his seat. The method practised in the Llanos differs but little from that of the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, so ably described by Sir Francis Head, Darwin, and other eminent writers. I will quote some passages from the first of these authors respecting this divertisement among the Gauchos; their method I specially commend to the numerous disciples of the renowned Rarey, who has so astonished the Old World and the New with his wonderful skill in horse-taming.

"The corral was quite full of horses, most of which were young ones, about three and four years old. The capataz, mounted on a strong, steady horse, rode into the corral, and threw his lazo over the neck of a young horse, and dragged him to the gate. For some time he was very unwilling to leave his comrades, but the moment he was forced out of the corral, his first idea was to gallop away; however, the jerk of the lazo checked him in a most effectual manner. The peons now ran after him on foot, and threw the lazo over his four legs, just above the fetlocks, and twitching it, they pulled his legs from under him so suddenly, that I really thought the fall he got had killed him. In an instant a Gaucho was seated upon his head, and

with his long knife, in a few seconds he cut off the whole of the horse's mane, while another cut the hair from the end of his tail. This they told me is a mark that the horse has been once mounted. They then put a piece of hide into his mouth to serve as a bit, and a strong hide-halter on his head. The Gaucho who was to mount, arranged his spurs, which were unusually long and sharp, and while two men held the animal by his ears, he put on the saddle, which he girthed extremely tight; he then caught hold of the horse's ear and in an instant vaulted into the saddle; upon which the man who was holding the horse by the halter, threw the end of it to the rider, and from that moment no one seemed to take any further notice of him. The horse instantly began to jump in a manner which made it very difficult for the rider to keep his seat, and quite different from the kick or plunge of an English horse; however, the Gaucho's spur soon set him going, and off he galloped, doing every thing in his power to throw his rider. Another horse was immediately brought from the corral, and so quick was the operation, that twelve Gauchos were mounted in a space which, I think, hardly exceeded an hour."

"It was singular to see the different manner in which the different horses behaved. Some would actually scream while the Gauchos were girthing the saddle upon their backs; some would instantly lie down and roll over it; while some would stand without being held, their legs stiff and in unnatural directions, their necks half bent towards their tails, and looking so vicious and sulky, that I could not help thinking I could not have mounted one of them for

any reward that could be offered me; and they were invariably the most difficult to subdue."

By repeating this treatment a number of times, and a sound thrashing with the *chaparro* whenever they prove refractory, the riders finally succeed in conquering the indomitable spirit of their steeds, although they long retain a vicious propensity to occasionally practise their old tricks, either by throwing themselves backwards upon their riders, or suddenly plunging headlong at a furious rate. Another dangerous habit is that of whirling rapidly, when least expected, in an opposite direction to the one intended by the rider, who, unless very expert, is unseated and liable to have his neck broken. But, when these horses are at length thoroughly broken in, there are few in the world capable of performing their duty so well as those trained in the Llanos of Venezuela.

My allusion on a former page to the renowned Rarey, recalls to my memory the name of Santos Nieves, a famous picador of San Pablo, whose ingenious mode of entrapping horses appears to have been formed on the same principle as that which has characterized Mr. Rarey's method.

Instead of dashing after the droves, with lazo in hand, and wild shouts, as is usual when the capture of one or more horses is intended, Santos Nieves made use of every precaution to avoid giving these shy creatures the least alarm; and so successfully were all his expeditions executed, that he achieved for himself the tremendous reputation of being a horse-witch. His plan was, however, the simplest possible. If the object was to capture only a single animal—which

feat is peculiarly difficult to accomplish in woody places especially—he made preparations as if for a long journey, previous to seeking the haunts of his intended captive. Having sojourned in San Pablo for over half a century, he was thoroughly acquainted with all their accustomed places of resort. The first impulse of the animal on finding himself followed, was to scamper off; but the patient picador, instead of hurrying in pursuit, quietly remained on the same spot, watching and waiting the next move of the animal. Presently the horse, seeing he was not pursued, would conclude to return and reconnoitre the object of his alarm. Satisfied from the quiet attitude of the man, that nothing need be feared from him, the horse resumed his brousing near by. Again the man cautiously and slowly advances, until perceived anew by the horse, who, as before, beats a rapid retreat. Impelled by curiosity, he returned for the third time; again inspects the picador, who remains motionless as before, upon seeing which, the animal concludes he may safely continue his meal. These manœuvrings, again and again repeated, usually occupied an entire day, towards the close of which, if the horse were not very scary, the picador, with cautious approach and gentle words, succeeded in placing the halter around his neck. The extreme coyness, however, of most of these animals, frequently compelled Santos Nieves to camp out for the night and resume his pursuit, not only the following morning, but, if necessary, for three or more consecutive days, at the end of which he always returned in triumph with his captive to the farm.

The relative value of these horses depends princi-

pally on their form, color, and gait. The Llaneros are quite skilful in teaching them a variety of paces and evolutions, which are as essential to their hazardous occupations, as is the helm to the mariner. For war purposes, they are especially invaluable, as was practically demonstrated in the long struggle with the Spaniards, who not being equally expert in the management of their steeds, were, in consequence, often at the mercy of their antagonists. A good charger must be endowed with an easy mouth, good wind, and quick movement to either side, so that when pursued by an enemy, he can be made to whirl suddenly to the attack if necessary. The same rule applies to those used in chasing wild animals, especially bulls, which, when hotly pursued, often face about and charge their assailants.

It is equally indispensable in warm climates, that a horse should possess an easy gait for travelling. In this respect, they are trained to the particular fancy or requirements of the rider. Some prefer a gentle trot on a long journey, as being the least fatiguing to the horse; but, for city riding, or short journeys, an amble, rack, or *pasitrote*—something between both—is usually adopted. The test of a good pacing horse consists in "the rider being able to carry a glass of water in his hand without spilling," while that of a first-rate charger is to stop, when at the height of his speed, on the slightest pull of the bridle.

Great regard is also paid to the color of horses; piebald, cream, and the various shades of white, are usually preferred. But, where great endurance and strength are requisite, connoisseurs generally select

those of a darker color. Their price in the country is greatly enhanced of late in consequence of a devastating disease, which has been raging among them for several years past. Horses were so plentiful in the Llanos at one time, that a large export trade in their hides was carried on with foreign countries. A good horse, which then only brought five dollars, now costs from eighty to one hundred, and even more, according to the fancy of the parties interested.—Great numbers of the inhabitants were also carried away by the same scourge, which swept over the land like the cholera, not even sparing the fish in the rivers.

This frightful epidemic, which the Llaneros have appropriately styled *Peste*, or plague, is supposed to have originated in the great primeval forest of San Camilo, at the head waters of the Apure, from decomposition of the vegetable detritus accumulated there during centuries. From thence, travelling eastward along the course of the river, the epidemic continued its ravages among the inhabitants of the towns and villages situated on the right bank, attacking first one place and then another, until the whole province scarcely escaped depopulation. Even when the mortality abated, the country, which until then had possessed a most healthful climate, never recovered its former salubrity; fevers of a more or less dangerous character prevail from that time, especially towards the end of the rainy season, while the raising of horses has been entirely abandoned in consequence.

The first symptoms of the epidemic appeared among the crocodiles, whose hideous carcasses might then be seen floating down the stream in such pro-

digious numbers, that both the waters and air of that fine region were tainted with their effluvium. It was observed that they were first seized with a violent fit of coughing, followed by a black vomit which compelled them to quit their watery home, and finally find a grave amongst the thickets on the river banks. The disease next attacked the fish and other inhabitants of the water, with equal violence, until it was feared the streams would be depopulated. The fearful mortality among them can be better estimated from the fact that, for more than a month, the rippling waves of that noble river, the Apure, were constantly washing down masses of putrefaction, its placid surface being by them actually hidden from view for several weeks.

The next victims were the pachidermata of the swamps, and it was a pitiable sight to see the sluggish *chigüires* (capyvaras) and the grizzly wild-boars dragging their paralyzed hind-quarters after them; hence the name of *derrengadera*, applied to this disease.

Not even monkeys in their aërial retreats, escaped the contagion, and their melancholy cries resounded day and night through the woods like wailings of the eternally lost.

It is a singular fact, that while the scourge did not spare any of the countless droves of horses roaming the savannas of the Apure, and adjacent plains, donkeys and horned cattle were seldom, if ever, attacked, so that, by their aid, the owners of cattle-farms were enabled to prevent the entire dispersion of their herds.

A curious incident related in connection with this

public calamity, is very current in the Llanos, respecting the origin of the disease among horses. Eugenio Torralva, a man of uncommon industry, although of humble extraction, had accumulated quite a handsome fortune by the raising of cattle, on the borders of La Portuguesa; but his chief wealth consisted in horses, on which he greatly prided himself—so much so that, on one occasion, while a distinguised personage was passing through his estate, Torralva directed his attention to the numerous droves grazing in the plains; then turning to his guest, who appeared equally delighted with the sight, said to him, "Think you, General, that I shall ever be in want of horses? *Ni que Dios quiera!* (Not even if God Almighty wished it!)" he blasphemously added. Two years later, the witness to this impious boast was again on his way to the Llanos: near San Juan he met an old man, apparently in a very destitute condition, riding a donkey. Not knowing who the wayfarer was, he bowed, as is customary, and rode on without taking further notice of the old man or his uncouth equipment; whereupon the stranger, waving his hand to him, cried, "Why, General, have you already forgotten your friend Torralva?" He that "giveth and taketh away" had deprived him of every horse, and the once wealthy farmer was now compelled to travel on an ass. It is asserted by the Llaneros that soon after he uttered the above-mentioned blasphemy, the *Peste* broke out among his immense stock, from whence they say the disease spread to other farms, until the contagion became general.

It is not a little singular that although the horse

was unknown to the aborigines of America, at the time of its conquest, the researches of Darwin and other eminent geologists have shown them to have existed in vast numbers on that continent contemporaneously with the Mastodon, Megatherium, Mylodon, and other extinct animals. "Certainly, it is a marvellous fact, in the history of mammalia," observes that assiduous explorer, "that in South America a native horse should have lived and disappeared, to be succeeded, in after ages, by the countless herds descended from the few introduced by the Spanish colonists!"

In general these animals are of middling size, and, like their progenitor, the Andalusian horse, endowed with a fiery spirit, (if not checked by ill-treatment or abuse,) and surprising endurance, especially during the exciting chase of wild cattle, when they are kept in constant motion for many consecutive days.

The steed of the Llanero, like his master, is accustomed to the inclemency of the seasons, being throughout the year kept in the open air, but always within reach: hence the well-known adage, *El ojo del amo engorda el caballo*, (the eye of the master will fatten the horse;) which adage implies the advantage of keeping a sharp lookout on other things besides horses.

CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS THE PAMPAS.

EARLY in the morning of the fifth day, we left the Ranch at La Yegüera to journey southward, followed by our long train of baggage mules and relay horses, our good-natured host and keeper, Agapito, escorting us for some distance in the double capacity of guide and entertainer. Without his assistance it would have been difficult for us to proceed on our journey, which lay across a rolling prairie, covered in some places by magnificent groves of tall timber trees and a vast multitude of slender, towering palms, which, by the glimmering light of the stars, appeared like a mighty fleet of ships guarding the entrance to some giant harbor. Although the morning was dark, and there was properly speaking no road, but only a beaten track branching off in all directions, our guide, who knew every inch of the ground, led us on without once turning to the right or left, merrily chanting some of the lively ballads of the Llanos. Occasionally he was joined by other bards equally

distinguished for their powers of voice and versification, thus producing very animated choruses of a character peculiarly wild.

As the sun rose in the horizon, we came upon another extensive plateau, the Mesa del Rastro, stretching for several miles, unbroken by a single tree or shrub, but alive with numberless herds of cattle roaming in all directions, while flocks of birds of every plumage, all new to me, flew affrighted at our approach, filling the air with their wild, peculiar cries. Among these, the Taro-taro, a large bird of the Ibis tribe, which derives its name from its bell-like notes, and the Carretero or carter, a beautiful species of goose with variegated plumage and crimson bill, particularly attracted my attention. The latter is named from the rumbling noise it makes when on the wing, similar in sound to the rumbling of cart-wheels on hard ground.

Continuing our march over this seemingly interminable plain, we at length descried in the horizon the village of El Rastro, where we purposed breakfasting and spending the hottest part of the day. We were cordially received and entertained at the house of Señor Llovera, a wealthy neighbor of ours, whose lands extended from the southern boundary of San Pablo to this village.

El Rastro is noted for the beauty and fresh complexion of the women, in spite of an ardent climate; and the males for their singular propensity to abstract the hair from the manes and tails of horses stopping at their village. This they often practise under the very noses of the unfortunate owners, for the purpose

of converting it into halters for their own steeds. Thus many a fine animal, which is supposed to be securely quartered for the night, is found next morning so shamefully disfigured that he can scarcely be recognized by his owner, who swears by all the saints in the calendar to take summary vengeance on the first *rastrero** who may chance to cross his path. Fortunately we had no cause of complaint, as our droves were constantly under the *surveillance* of a dozen or more vigilant keepers, perfectly *au fait* to the peculiar taste of that community.

The beautiful complexion of the women is the more extraordinary from the fact that this village, which stands on the southern edge of the plateau, is entirely exposed to the glare of a tropical sun, and the hot breezes of the east. I nowhere met during my journey, such rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes as in this miserable hamlet. I could almost fancy them the fairies of the wilderness, bewitching the unsuspecting traveller, while their perfidious helpmates practise their rascally tricks.

These high terraces possess the advantage of being free from those noxious exhalations which render the plains below so unhealthy at certain seasons. Owing to the nature of the soil, mostly composed of a loose conglomerate or shingle, no permanent deposits of stagnant water are formed, endangering the health of the inhabitants, who are often blessed with a "green old age" and the possession of unimpaired mental and bodily faculties. Many are the instances where

* *Rastrero*—a native of El Rastro—literally, a mean rogue.

men attaining seventy and eighty years are still able to take part in the hardy ventures of the country along with their more youthful companions. Among our own party we had several individuals of this class who, after experiencing all the vicissitudes of a destructive war, had seen many a hot summer roll by, and camped out amidst the drenching showers of the rainy season, without any material change in their physique. Of these were Santos Nieves, the horse tamer, whose only food consisted of jerked beef, cheese, and *papelon*, upon which he had thrived admirably up to the age of seventy; Crisóstomo, the negro major domo of San Pablo, who had lost all recollection of his earlier days; Conrado, the horse driver, whose age and experience in conducting our refractory *madrinas* had entitled him to the revered appelation of *taita* or father. But the most extraordinary instance of longevity which has come to my ears, is in the Monagas family, also hailing from those regions, the age and number of whose members seriously alarmed the republic at one time; for the multitude of their rapacious demands appeared endless. The patriarch of the family is said to have attained the moderate age of one hundred and twenty years, yet was able to scour the savannas on horseback after the cattle up to the time of his death. The memorable José Tadeo, the late Dictator and tyrant of the republic, is yet in his prime at the age of seventy-nine, while his brothers Gregorio and José Francisco, whose vandalic career of plunder and assassination was—happily for the country that gave them birth—cut off by the late revolution, did not

show the least signs of unabated vigor at the time of their death, although one of them was considerably older than Tadeo. And last, though not least, the renowned zambo general, Sotillo, the pet bull-dog of the family, to which, however, he bears no other relationship than that existing among rogues of the same stamp: although now in his eightieth year, he is able to carry on a successful partisan warfare against the existing government. Without a roof to shelter him, and no other equipment of war than the lance and horse, this savage chieftain, for such he is by birth and education, has set at defiance all the forces sent in his pursuit, and nearly brought the country to the verge of barbarism in his strivings to uphold the iniquitous claims of this rapacious family. Fierce in looks and menacing in tone, with a head more like a polar bear than a South American savage, he has become for a long time the terror of the eastern provinces, which are in constant dread of his sudden attacks—now cutting off small detachments of troops and defenceless individuals, now retreating to his fastness amidst the arid plains of the Alto Llano at the approach of a superior force. He has even succeeded in defeating such on two or three occasions by his cunning manœuvring and the rapidity of his movements. During half a century, his favorite occupation has been hunting wild cattle and waging a guerilla warfare against society, which too often has been compelled to yield to the savage demands of this Bedouin of the Llanos.

Having partaken of a substantial breakfast, we

bade adieu to our kind host, and again betook ourselves to our long and weary journey across the Pampas. Descending to the plain, stretching for a thousand miles to the foot of the Bolivian Andes, we at once entered into an entirely different country, showing unmistakable proofs of a diluvial origin. The soil, mostly a mixture of clay and sand, no longer offended the feet of our horses with those extensive beds of pebbles so trying to the poor beasts. The vegetation, also, whenever favored by some accident of the ground, showed a marked difference in character. The thorny mimosas, which only thrive in a gravelly soil, here disappeared altogether, and were replaced by dense groves of laurel and other balsamiferous trees. The Copernicia palms, so extensively used for thatching and other economic purposes, reappeared at first in a few scattered clumps, and afterwards in countless multitudes, literally closing the perspective with their tall, slender trunks. This beautiful palm is known in the country under various names, according to the uses made of its separate parts. These are almost as numerous as the leaves of its dense, symmetrical foliage. Thus, by the rural architect of the Llanos, it is called *palma de cobija*—thatch palm. When its leaves are plaited and neatly braided into hats that never wear out, it bears the name of *palma de sombrero;* and when the same are employed in driving off the myriads of flies that infest the premises, or in fanning the heated dweller in those regions, it is called *palma abanico;* and so on through a long catalogue.

A house thatched with this palm is not only im-

pervious to the pouring showers of the tropics, but against fire also, as it is nearly incombustible: a hot coal dropped on it will only burn slowly where it falls, without spreading or raising any flame. It is, moreover, very durable and cool throughout the hottest months. All the fences and corrals of the region where it abounds are made of the entire trunks of this palm, while the cattle find a grateful shelter under its dense shade. The slowness of its growth, observable even after centuries have elapsed, is another curious peculiarity of this palm. When Europeans first penetrated this wild region, they found extensive tracks covered with low, apparently stunted plants, a few inches only above ground. According to the recollection of the oldest inhabitants, of whom there are many in the country, as I have already stated, these dwarfish palm forests have not altered very perceptibly during their lives. It must therefore have taken a full-grown plant thousands of years to attain the height of twenty feet, which is their average size.

Emerging from these extensive *palmares*—palm forests—we again found ourselves in the midst of the boundless plain, assuming here as desolate an aspect as if fire had passed over its entire surface, a dreary waste of dried-up swamps, parched by the burning sun. Dismal tracts of these *terroneros*, as they are termed, lay before us, having the appearance of an extensive honey-comb, over which our jaded beasts stumbled at every step, increasing our weariness to a state almost bordering on desperation. The action of the rains washing the earth from around the grass tufts, which are afterwards parched and hardened by

the heat of the sun, leaves the surface of the ground covered with numerous little clumps of indurated clay, so closely packed that there was no footing for the animals.

Even the cattle seemed to have forsaken this inhospitable region, for, with the exception of a few stragglers, there were no signs of animation. Most of the cattle are transferred at this season to the fertile shores of the Apure and Portuguesa; or they abandon of their own accord these dreary wastes for well-known streams where they allay their thirst. Ours was intense on this occasion, while the tantalizing mirage, that singular atmospheric phenomenon so peculiar to arid deserts, haunted us incessantly with its rippling, vapory phantom, a feeling in which our poor beasts seemed to participate, as with outstretched necks and ears they snuffed in vain the far horizon in search of the reviving element. By an unpardonable oversight, our men had neglected to fill their gourds with water, and now we felt the want of it.

These scenes have been described so graphically by the eloquent pen of Humboldt, in his "Tableaux de la Nature," that I will not attempt it further, but refer my reader to the following:

"When under the vertical rays of the never-clouded sun, the carbonized tufty covering falls into dust, the indurated soil cracks asunder as if from the shock of an earthquake. If at such times two opposing currents of air, whose conflicts produce a rotary motion, come in contact with the soil, the plain assumes a strange and singular aspect. Like conical-shaped clouds, the points of which descend to the

earth, the sand rises through the rarified air in the electrically charged centre of the whirling current, resembling the loud waterspout dreaded by the experienced mariner. The lowering sky sheds a dim, almost straw-colored light on the desolate plain; the horizon draws suddenly near; the steppe seems to contract, and with it the heart of the wanderer. The hot, dusty particles which fill the air, increase its suffocating heat, and the east wind blowing over the long-heated soil brings with it no refreshment, but rather a still more burning glow. The pools, which the yellow, fading branches of the fan palm had protected from evaporation, now gradually disappear. As in the icy north the animals become torpid with cold, so here, under the influence of the parching drought, the crocodile and the boa become motionless and fall asleep, deeply buried in the dry mud. Everywhere the death-threatening drought prevails, and yet, by the play of the refracted rays of light producing the phenomenon of the mirage, the thirsty traveller is everywhere pursued by the illusive image of a cool, rippling, watery mirror. The distant palm bush, apparently raised by the influence of the contact of unequally heated, and therefore unequally dense strata of air, hovers above the ground, from which it is separated by a narrow intervening margin."

Indeed, so perfect was this illusion of the mirage, that on one occasion Mr. Thomas and myself were entirely deceived by the appearance of a beautiful lake which we prepared to sketch. But what was our surprise when, on climbing a tree to obtain a better view, the phantom disappeared as if by magic! This occurs

whenever the spectator places himself above the line of the natural horizon.

At length we reached a solitary pool of muddy water in the midst of the savanna, which was hailed with joy by man and beast; but, on nearer inspection, the thirsty travellers were seized with disgust and disappointment on seeing several dead and dying animals embedded in the mud. These quagmires form extensive barriers in some places, especially in dried-up creeks where hundreds of animals perish every year, being unable to extricate themselves from the adhesive quality of the clay. At our approach two hideous alligators rushed into the pond, and thus the scanty portion that had not been disturbed by the tramping of animals was in a moment thickened like the rest. However, there being no other alternative, we were compelled to follow the example of our sturdy Llaneros, who proceeded without much consideration to dip their calabashes into that species of mud soup; then covering the mouths of the *totumas* with our handkerchiefs, we sucked through them this miserable substitute for water.

About noon we descried a speck in the horizon, looking like a sail at sea. Increasing in size as we neared it, it soon appeared to be a solitary mound or promontory; by degrees it assumed more distinctness, finally presenting to our view all the luxuriance of tropical vegetation. This was the Mata de San Pedro, a sort of island grove of splendid forest trees, which, like a veritable oasis, stood in the midst of those desert plains, a relief to the parched and wayworn traveller. *Mata* is the name by which the

natives designate these lovely gems of the Pampas, no less cherished than are those of the famed African Desert by the wearied caravan; like them, they receive appropriate names from some peculiarity of feature or other trivial cause, as Mata Gorda, Mata Redonda, &c. But whatever be the name, all hail with joy these verdant bowers, a cool retreat to every species of animal in summer, and a safe refuge during the season of floods, for, being somewhat higher than the surrounding country, they are rarely overflowed by the periodical inundations.

It was entirely dark on our arrival at the Mata, and we were then so weary that there was little inclination evinced to make any preparations for supper, and we were also greatly in need of water. Although the earth was parched by the long drought, Providence has placed a few feet below the surface an unlimited supply of the purest water. This can be obtained at any time by merely digging for it with a wooden pole sharpened at one end. In the present instance we were spared this trouble, as some of our people, well acquainted with the place, knew where one of these primitive wells could be found. Our first business, therefore, was to seek for the *jagüey* in spite of the deadly rattlesnakes said to abound there. From this we obtained sufficient water for ourselves and riding horses, the other animals being left to shift for themselves, always under the close vigilance, however, of the watchmen appointed for the night. These men had a hard task: apart from the fatigue of keeping awake and on horseback all

night, they were in constant fear of a sudden stampede among the horses, which not unfrequently occurs. To provide against a contretemps of the sort, those in immediate use were secured nightly by straps attached to the feet, which prevented their straying far from the camp.

We rose very early, judging from the height of the *Lucero* or morning star—which in those solitudes takes the place of town clock—whose brilliancy almost equals that of the full moon. I nowhere recollect having seen this gorgeous luminary of morning shed such radiant streams of light as in the ever-cloudless sky of the Llanos during the summer months. In equal proportion all the other heavenly bodies seem there to vie with each other in heightening the splendor of that glorious firmament, cheering the heart of the wanderer who finds himself, like the mariner on the high seas, encompassed only by the vault of heaven, whose glowing lamps were then our unerring guide towards the south, enabling us to dispense with compass or any landmarks by which to direct our course. Towards evening, we deviated a little from it, hoping to reach a cattle-farm, intending to pass the night there; but our horses being almost exhausted from the roughness of the ground, compelled us to stop by the banks of a treeless creek abounding in alligators; this we knew by the strong odor of musk which pervaded the air. In spite of their proximity, which made me start more than once in my dreams, we slept soundly in our ponchos on the hard ground, for want of trees from which to sling our hammocks. This lack of firewood compelled us also

to go supperless that night and without breakfast next morning. After a long search we finally succeeded in collecting a handful of drift wood along the banks of the creek, enabling Monico to make us a stimulating cup of coffee in which to "drown our sorrows."

Midday brought us to the cattle-farm we were in quest of, when immediate preparations were made for an ample meal, which should compensate us for previous privations. The overseer informed us that not far from the house was a herd of cattle bearing our brand. Thither we despatched two men in search of the fattest among them. In a short time they returned with a fine cow, which was speedily slaughtered and spitted before a blazing fire kindled under three stupendous mimosa trees bearing flat, kidney-shaped legumes or pods six inches in circumference. Our hunger appeased, we spread our ponchos under the shade of these giants of the vegetable world, and slept until noon, when we were again in our saddles prosecuting the journey through a less monotonous landscape. The plain, although still preserving the same rough character, was diversified with groves of other leguminous trees, (Cañafistulos,) the pods of which were nearly three feet in length, and contain a black pulp valuable as a cathartic.

Towards evening we were gratified by seeing, for the first time, that splendid spectacle, a prairie on fire. The grass, parched with the burning sun, is purposely fired by the natives to promote the growth of the new crop, which last, owing to the heavy dews, starts long before the rainy season sets in. The con-

flagration extended for more than three miles, the strong evening breeze driving it onward in curling fiery billows. Volumes of smoke loaded with burning particles of grass, ascended in clouds, increasing the grandeur and beauty of the scene by their various tints of red, pink, and purple, diffused throughout the atmosphere. Aided by this illumination, we were enabled to discover a solitary ranch, where we tarried the remainder of the night, although there was nothing to be had there in the shape of edibles. Fortunately one of our party had shot a number of wild ducks in a lagoon, and a provident individual had saved some choice morsels of the cow. There was some difficulty in procuring wood enough for a fire, but a couple of rafters from the old ranch afforded the needful fuel, and thus we were happily prevented passing a supperless, as well as comfortless night.

Many hours before daybreak we were again up, saddling and loading our animals, which, owing to the darkness, was always the most irksome part of the journey. We were, however, most happy to bid adieu to the solitary ranch with its myriads of bats, the only tenants we encountered there.

CHAPTER VIII.

LA PORTUGUESA.

Again we were under way, and again our eyes encountered only the flat monotonous plain on all sides sweeping to the horizon, varied only in being more barren, rougher, and consequently more exhausting to our horses than any of the preceding. Many of the riders dismounted, that the poor brutes might be relieved as much as possible, and accomplished the remainder of the journey on foot. This occasioned a burning thirst, which the scant supply of water in our gourds was not sufficient to allay; and it was not until noon had long passed, that our guides, pointing to a blue ridge of forest in the distance, informed us it marked the course of the river Portuguesa, our intended halting place, and on the borders of which we purposed spending several days. The cavalcade, inspirited by this view, pressed forward as rapidly as their exhausted condition would permit, and fortunately reached the pass before nightfall.

This beautiful river has its rise in the mountains

of Trujillo, and connects the fertile province of Barinas with the sea, through the Apure and Orinoco, being in fact one of the principal tributaries of the former. Its commercial advantages, as may be imagined, are of great importance to the interior of a country so distant from the ocean, and whose principal products consist in the bulky yield of the plantations. It is navigable during a great portion of the year, especially for steam vessels, and I am happy to learn that the great civilizer of the world—steam—has at length been introduced there through the enterprising energy of some Yankee speculators.

The banks of the river, being both high and precipitous, a passage to it can only be accomplished at certain points, where the hand of man and the tramp of animals have cut deep trenches, forming paths to the water's edge. On this occasion, we sought the pass of San Jaime, where a ferryman is stationed with a canoe to take across any who desire it. Horses, however, being excellent swimmers, are left to ferry themselves over. Our first care on arriving at the pass was to unload our beasts of burden, and unsaddle our steeds for the purpose of allowing them to cool before entering the water, a precaution which, if neglected, not unfrequently proves fatal to both man and beast. This duty fulfilled, we proceeded to hail the *Canoero*, whose ranch was perched upon the south bank of the river. The knowledge that he would receive a "real" for every man and beast that crossed, besides various perquisites from passengers whom he supplied with meals during their sojourn at his ranch, so expedited his motions, that in a few moments his frail

barge received its first load, each person taking his own chattels with him. A boy of fifteen, naked and sunburnt, paddled the canoe, while the ferryman steered it by means of his *canalete*. The utmost care was necessary to prevent the overturn of the crazy skiff, which reeled at every stroke of the paddle, threatening to pitch all its contents overboard. As soon as we landed on the opposite shore, the boat returned for a second load, and the trips were repeated until the whole party had crossed. There now only remained the horses, who being extremely shy of deep water, required to be forced to swim across, an operation demanding considerable skill on the part of the drivers. The only way was to give them an example; accordingly two expert swimmers, divesting themselves of clothes, jumped upon the bare back of their horses and plunged incontinently into the stream. Then, sliding off to one side, they allowed the horses to swim without encumbrance, supporting themselves with one hand upon the animal's haunches, while with the other they guided them by means of a halter. Meanwhile, those that remained on shore set up a tremendous shouting and yelling, at the same time shaking their ponchos violently with the intent to frighten all the rest of the troop down the steep embankment, where, encouraged at the sight of the two ahead, they all entered the stream and followed their leaders without further difficulty. Several large crocodiles, who had watched all these proceedings from the middle of the river, alarmed by the confusion, disappeared from view, and then the heads only of the leaders and their steeds rose, puffing and snort-

ing, above water. In spite, however, of all the uproar, one of these men was instantly attacked by caribes, and very narrowly escaped serious injury from them. I was standing at the time on the opposite side of the river, watching this novel mode of ferrying, and observed that the man, abandoning his horse, endeavored to reach the bank by long strides, occasionally lashing himself with a coiled lazo he carried in his hand. It immediately occurred to me that he might have been attacked by crocodiles, a belief which was strengthened on seeing the poor fellow's sides streaming blood as he stepped upon the beach. My first apprehension was quickly dispelled by his pointing to a circular wound on his shoulder, about the size of a quarter dollar, and to others as severe on various parts of his body, inflicted by caribes. Had the man been a less expert swimmer, or the water less agitated, the accident would undoubtedly have proved more serious; as it was, we were considerably alarmed for the fate of the other man, who, however, happily escaped unhurt.

The surprising boldness of these diminutive fish, naturally increased my anxiety to examine more minutely into their peculiarities, than I had yet the opportunity of doing. I therefore determined to procure fresh specimens, if possible. On a former occasion I had lost most of my trout hooks, but I still preserved some larger ones, mounted with copper wire, to be used in the rivers of the Apure; these I supposed proof against the teeth of any fish, and no sooner were we established in the ranch of the ferryman, than, taking my lines I hastened to the river accom-

panied by my English co-laborer, the artist. The hooks were baited with pieces of fresh beef, and dropped with great precaution near the shore. Scarcely did the bait touch the water, when it was seized by caribes. Without allowing them time, as it seemed, to get the whole of it between their jaws, we pulled in the lines, but, alas! minus hooks, as well as bait. On examination, we discovered that one of the hooks had been cut through, while the other was severed from the wire. Still, we persevered, but invariably with the same unfortunate result.

Greatly annoyed, I turned to question a Llanero, who stood near laughing at what he considered my simplicity. Another tapped me gently on the shoulder, and addressed me with "*Niño*, you might as well attempt to catch a rattlesnake by the tail" (a favorite expression among them) "as to think of hooking one of those chaps." What is to be done, then? for I must have at least a couple of these scoundrels, said I. "Who ever saw a genteel young gentleman like yourself, with a taste for such disgusting creatures?" he replied, imagining that I wanted them for eating. On my explanation that my object was simply to sketch and preserve them in spirits, they advised me to procure a piece of tough skin from the head of an ox which was then being slaughtered, and to suspend it from a strip of the same material. I immediately followed their instructions, and shortly repaired again to the river. Seating myself on the stern of the canoe, which was moored across the stream, I dropped my novel bait into the water, and watched for the result with the utmost interest. In

a moment a shoal of caribes collected around the bait and commenced attacking it voraciously. Finding the thick cartilage too tough even for their sharp teeth, and unwilling to give it up, they continued gnawing at it like so many little hyenas. When I imagined them to be fairly "stuck" through the thick skin, I lifted the whole concern over the side of the canoe, and had the satisfaction of seeing about a dozen of the fish dancing at the bottom of my barge. Finding this novel style of fishing rather easy and entertaining, I continued it until I was suddenly apprised into whose company I had thrust myself by feeling the heel of my left foot seized by one of the captives with such violence as caused me to drop my bait, with the vicious creatures that were hanging from it, into the river. My only thought now was how to contrive my escape, having the whole length of the canoe to traverse, and its floor paved with these ravenous little wretches. My first impulse was to spring overboard; but a moment's reflection convinced me that it would be a jump from the "frying pan into the fire." Placed thus, as it were, between Scylla and Charybdis, I again appealed to the ingenuity of my former advisers for deliverance. This they readily accomplished by a very simple contrivance, consisting of a gunny bag, which they spread over the gaping draught of fish. In a moment their sharp teeth were again at work, this time among the tough fibres of the bag, to which they clung with the tenacity of bull-dogs, thus enabling us to fish them out again without difficulty.

My biting experience of these little pests left me

in no mood to spare them, and I never missed an opportunity of provoking a bloody conflict among them. With this view I made it my daily business to scatter pieces of flesh in the river, which never failed in attracting great numbers to the spot. These devoured the meat in a few moments, after which, being themselves of a red hue, and mistaking each other for the meat, they continued the feast by devouring one another, until few of them remained alive. Thus I accomplished my revenge upon these cannibals of the finny tribe. The pike and the caribe are, I believe, the only fish which devour those of their own species when disabled. "As no one dares to bathe where it is found," remarks Humboldt in his travels, "it may be considered as one of the greatest scourges of those climates, in which the sting of the mosquitoes and the general irritation of the skin, render the use of baths so necessary."

Fortunately for mankind, these fish are subject to a yearly mortality during the heats of summer, when the water is deprived of a portion of the air it holds in solution. Their carcasses may then be seen floating on the water by thousands, while the beach is strewn with their bones, especially their bristling jaws, which render walking barefoot on the borders of lagoons extremely dangerous.

To judge from the incessant turmoil in the river at all hours of the night, besides evident proofs of their depredations during the day, I concluded that the havoc they commit on the other denizens of the water must be very great. Even the armor-clad crocodiles are not exempt from their attacks, when

wounded in their own quarrels, as they sometimes are, during the season of their loves, for even crocodiles are subject to jealousy, that other "green-eyed monster." *

During the annual inundation of the savannas, when quadrupeds perish by thousands in the vernal deluge, the caribes have ample field for their voracity; but living animals are not exempted, for they prey with equal fierceness upon the young calves when wading through the marshes, and upon the mothers, whose udders they so mutilate, that the young ones frequently perish from lack of nourishment. The poor cattle lead about this season a truly miserable life. Those that escape the teeth of the caribe, the coil of the anaconda, that great water serpent, or the jaws of the equally dreaded crocodile, are in continual danger of falling a prey to the lion or the jaguar, while congregated upon the *bancos* and other places left dry amidst the rising waters. None, however, escape the tormenting sting of myriad insects which, until the waters subside, fill the air they breathe. Even at night, when all created beings should rest in peace, enormous vampires, issuing from the gloomy recesses of the forest, perch upon the backs of the sufferers and suck their life blood, all the while lulling them with the flapping of their spurious wings. In fact, it seems as if in these regions all the elements conspired against these useful creatures; for, after these varied evils have abated with the return of the dry season, the hand of man is also continually against them in harassing hunts, or in firing the ripe pastures

* The eyes of crocodiles are tinted with green.

which sweep their realms in devastating fury, driving them in consternation from the fields of their enjoyment.

The crocodiles of this river are noted for being the most savage and daring in the Llanos. Although usually styled yellow caymans, to distinguish them from the common alligator, which is of a darker hue, they are in fact real crocodiles, with an acute snout, like those inhabiting the Nile and other celebrated rivers of Africa.

While walking along the banks of the Portuguesa, one may see these huge lizards collected in groups of half a dozen or more, basking in the sunshine near the water, with their jaws wide open until their ghastly palates are filled with flies or other creatures alighting within them. We tried in vain shooting them with guns; the reptiles were so wary, that the moment we took aim they rushed into the water. Being at a loss how to procure a subject for my pencil, I sought the advice of an old man, an angler by profession, who lived in one of the huts near the river. He agreed to let me have his canoe with his son to paddle it, and the requisite number of harpoons, providing I could obtain the assistance of an Indian boy from the neighborhood, who was a capital marksman with the bow and arrow. "What!" I exclaimed in astonishment, "do we expect to kill one of these monsters with so slight a thing as an arrow?" "No, Señorito," he calmly answered; "but you must first know where to find him under water before you can strike him with the harpoon; the

arrow of which I speak is the kind we use in catching turtles." These arrows are constructed so as to allow the head, affixed to the shaft somewhat in the manner of a lance, to come off the moment it strikes an object in the water. A slender cord, several feet in length, connects it with the shaft, which last is made of a light, buoyant reed; around this the cord is wound closely until it reaches the point where the head is, then fastened securely. The shaft being extremely light, floats on the surface of the water the moment it is set free from the head by the struggles of the animal, thus acting as a guide for its recovery.

The old angler then proceeded to explain that the operation must be conducted first by sending one of these arrows into the body of the crocodile to mark his position under water; and then, if practicable, we might plunge a harpoon into the only vulnerable spot we could hope to reach, viz., the nape of the neck, after which the animal could be easily dragged on shore by means of strong ropes attached to the harpoon.

Accordingly, I went in search of the Indian boy, whom I found under a tree, seated like a toad on his haunches, skinning a porcupine he had just killed. At my approach he raised his head and fixed on me his unmeaning eyes. When spoken to, he only replied to all my questions with the monosyllables, *si*, *no*. After a little coaxing, and the promise of some fish hooks, he followed me to the canoe without uttering a word more. We were not long in getting a chance to test the skill of my new acquaintance. As we approached the river banks, a large crocodile hove

in sight, floating down the stream like a log of wood. Our position was most favorable to send an arrow rattling through his scales, and my young Nimrod lost no time in improving the opportunity. Stepping a few paces in advance, and bending gracefully over the precipice, he let fly at the reptile's head his slender, yellow reed, *por elevacion*, viz., shooting the arrow up into the air at an angle of forty-five, which causes it to descend with great force upon the object, after describing an arc of a circle in the manner of a bomb-shell. Although the distance was fully three hundred paces, the arrow struck the mark with the precision of a rifle ball. A violent plunge of the huge reptile was my first intimation that the trial had been successful, and a moment after I perceived the golden reed, now attached to him, skimming swiftly over the surface of the water. We hastened for the canoe, and immediately gave chase up the stream, as the crocodile had taken that direction. We were rapidly gaining upon him, when, alarmed at the sound of the paddles, he sunk in very deep water, as was indicated by the reed. This circumstance rendered it impossible to employ our harpoon. We tried in vain to start him; he stuck to the muddy bottom whence neither pulls nor curses could move him. We hoped that in time he would come to the surface to breathe, and then we might strike him with a harpoon; but in this we were equally disappointed. After waiting for him two hours, we gave him up, along with the arrow head sticking in his own.

I made various other attempts to secure a specimen, but with no better result, as the river was yet too high to sound for them.

While in this place, I was told several incidents in relation to the cunning and instinct of these saurians, one of which appeared to me most remarkable in an animal of the reptile tribe. The ferryman here possessed at one time a great many goats. One day he perceived that several of them had disappeared, and not being able to account for it in any other way, he at once laid the blame on the hated crocodiles, although these creatures seldom carry their attacks beyond their own element. His suspicions, he discovered in the end, were well founded, having witnessed the destruction of one of his goats in a very singular manner. It appeared that a crocodile had in some mysterious way discovered that goats delight in jumping from place to place, but more especially from rocks or mounds. Rocks, however, being rather scarce in the country, their treacherous enemy undertook to gratify their taste for this innocent pastime, and at the same time cater to his own. Approaching the water's edge to within a few feet from the bank, he swelled out his back in such a manner as gave it the appearance of a small island or promontory. The stupid goats perceiving this, varied their gambols by jumping from their secure places on shore upon the seeming island, which they, however, never reached, for the crocodile, tossing up his head at the right instant, received them into his open jaws, and swallowed them without difficulty.

Crocodiles have a special penchant for dogs also, and never miss an opportunity of gratifying their taste for the canine. In this, however, they are often balked by the superior cunning of their intended tit-

bits. One day I observed a couple of tiger-hounds quietly enjoying a cool bath in the river. Struck with their apparent *nonchalance* when in such a dangerous proximity, I found on inquiry that these animals never approach the water, either to drink or to bathe, without previously attracting the crocodiles by means of repeated howlings to some distant spot. This instinct of the dog with regard to crocodiles seems to be rather of antique date, for I find it recorded in the writings of both ancient and modern travellers in different parts of the world.

No person can venture near the water without danger from their attacks, being so treacherous that they approach their intended victim near enough to strike him with their powerful tails before he is even aware of their proximity. The bubbling sound of a gourd being filled in the water by some imprudent person, specially attracts them. To obviate this danger, a calabash bowl with a long wooden handle is usually employed for the purpose; yet, even this is not unfrequently snatched from the hands of the water-carrier. If by accident a human being falls a prey to this tyrant of the river, the reptile is then called *cebado*, which appellation implies every thing that is bold, ferocious, and treacherous in an animal of the species, as from that time they not only waylay persons, but follow them in the canoes, in hopes of again securing this dainty morsel. There are, however, men bold enough to meet the enemy face to face in his own element. The man who makes up his mind to this encounter is well aware that this must be a conflict to the death for one of the antago-

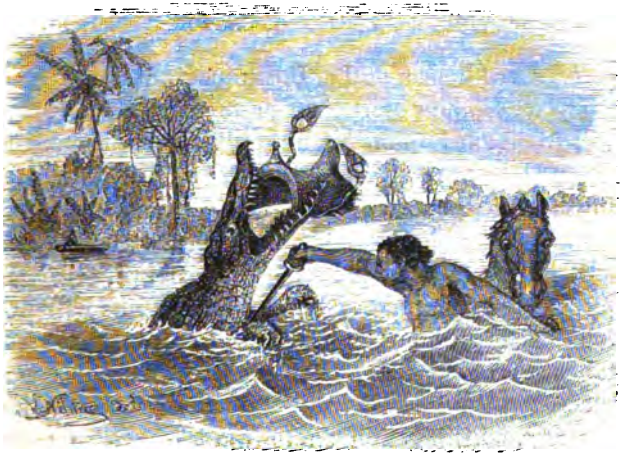
nists. The ferryman related to us a feat of gallantry worthy of a better cause, performed here by a Llanero with one of these monsters. The man was on his way to San Jaime on a pressing errand. Being in haste to get there the same day, he would not wait for the canoe to be brought to him, but prepared to swim across, assisted by his horse. He had already secured his saddle and clothes upon his head, as is usual on similar occasions, when the ferryman cried out to him to beware of a *caiman cebado*, then lurking near the pass, urging upon him, at the same time, to wait for the canoe. Scorning this advice, the Llanero replied with characteristic pride, "Let him come; I was never yet afraid of man or beast." Then laying aside a part of his ponderous equipment, he placed his two-edged dagger between his teeth, and plunged fearlessly into the river. He had not proceeded far, when the monster rose and made quickly towards him. The ferryman crossed himself devoutly, and muttered the holy invocation of *Jesus, Maria y José!* fearing for the life, and, above all, for the toll of the imprudent traveller. In the mean time, the swimmer continued gliding through the water towards the approaching crocodile. Aware of the impossibility of striking his adversary a mortal blow unless he could reach the armpit, he awaited the moment when the reptile should attack him, to throw his saddle at him. This he accomplished so successfully, that the crocodile, doubtless imagining it to be some sort of good eating, jumped partly out of the water to catch it. Instantly the Llanero plunged his dagger up to the very hilt into the fatal spot. A hoarse

grunt and a tremendous splash showed that the blow was mortal, for the ferocious monster sunk beneath the waves to rise no more.

Proud of this achievement, and scorning the tardy assistance of the ferryman, who offered to pick him up in his canoe, he waved his bloody dagger in the air, exclaiming, as he did so: "Is there no other about here?" and then turning, he swam leisurely back to take his horse across.

The *canoero* who related this adventure then added: "So delighted was I on that occasion, that I killed my fattest hen to treat the man to a good *sancocho*, for the caiman had devoured all my goats."

But this is only one of the many exploits constantly being enacted in these regions, by the bold race of men inhabiting them.



There is still living at San Fernando, a town at the confluence of the Apure and Portuguesa rivers, another individual equally bold in attacking crocodiles, in which warfare he uses only a wooden mace or club. He is possibly one of the greatest swimmers in that or any other country, having repeatedly accomplished the run between San Fernando and El Diamante—a plantation which he owns, three miles below the town—without once stopping on the way. Armed with his heavy club in one hand, and a bottle of rum in the other, to keep himself in good spirits, this modern Hercules will, for the fun of it, during a spree, provoke a fight with a *caiman cebado;* and so effectual has been his warfare, that he has actually succeeded in driving them away from the pass, formerly so infested by them, that scarcely a year elapsed in which numbers of persons were not carried off by them, helpless washerwomen especially.

I observed, also, at La Portuguesa, a great number of fresh-water porpoises or *toninas*, as they are called there, swimming with rapidity against the current, and bending their backs gracefully like their congeners of the sea. Crocodiles appeared to avoid them, and would invariably dive out of the way at their approach. It is probable that from this circumstance arose the current belief that *toninas* will befriend persons when they chance to fall into the water, against the attacks of crocodiles. It is, moreover, asserted that these cetacea will rescue a man from drowning, pushing him on to the shore with their

snouts. In acknowledgment of this animal philanthropy, the hand of man is there never raised against these inoffensive creatures; and so conscious are they of this, that they seem rather to delight in his neighborhood, sporting around the canoes which ascend the river, and spouting jets of water and compressed air like miniature whales.

CHAPTER IX.

THE APURE RIVER.

We tarried several days at La Portuguesa to afford our horses time to recover from the fatigues of the previous rough journeys. We also expected to incorporate there another drove, which having been kept throughout the summer grazing in the ever-verdant meadows of this river, were now in very fine condition. In the mean time, we were agreeably occupied in hunting, fishing and dancing; the people of the neighborhood being sufficient for our social entertainments.

Every morning we rode out to the savannas to hunt an ox for our meals. The remainder of the day was occupied in scouring the adjacent woods and plains after our steeds, who seemed as if conscious of the life that awaited them beyond La Portuguesa; for it required all the ingenuity and sagacity of the Llaneros to discover their hiding-places, and bring them again to the corrals. The evenings were devoted to dancing and singing by the light of half a

dozen *candiles*, or lamps made of burned clay, and filled with the grease of crocodiles. The habitations being considerably scattered along the banks of the river, we employed a number of runners for the purpose of bringing the company to the *fandango*, as these nocturnal revelries are called, who came in canoes or wading through the mud as occasion required.

And now, refined and courteous reader, picture to yourself a motley assemblage, brought together without any regard to color, age, or position, under an open shed or barracoon dimly lighted, and you will form an idea of our *soirées dansantes*, which for merriment and courtesy might with good reason have been the envy of the most polished *reuniones*.

The orchestra was composed of a guitar scarcely larger than the hand that twanged it, a banjo of huge proportions, and a couple of noisy *maracas*, rattle-boxes made from the shell of the calabash fruit, and filled with the seed of a Marantha or Indian shot. No music is considered complete without this accompaniment, which, as well as I could judge, filled the place of castanets, or the less romantic "bones" of negro minstrelsy. A wooden handle is attached to each, to enable the performer to shake them to and fro, which he does with appropriate gestures and contortions expressive of his different emotions. A corresponding choir of singers, picked from our own suite, was attached to the players. All Llaneros are passionately fond of music, and display considerable talent, composing many beautiful songs of a national character, called *tonos* or *trovas llaneras*. Few in

the country are not gifted with the power of versification, and there are among them many famous *improvisatori*. Whenever two of these are brought together, a competition for the laurel crown is the invariable consequence. This amicable strife sometimes occupies several successive hours, ending only when one of the bards is fairly silenced by the other; the victor is then declared the *lion* of the fête and receives accordingly not only the congratulations of his admirers, but also secures the smiles of the most sparkling eyes in the company. It is really surprising to see men, who cannot distinguish one letter of the alphabet from another, compose and extemporize poetry which, although rude in character, is nevertheless full of interest and significance. Most of their songs and ballads refer to deeds of valor performed by their own heroes; while others recount their love adventures, and daily struggles with the wild and unsubdued nature which surrounds them. Their instruments, when handled with skill, produce very harmonious sounds. The *bandola* or banjo bears no resemblance to the one in common use among the negroes of the States. It is, in fact, a guitar of large proportions, shaped somewhat like the lute of old. The guitar of the Llanos is the reverse of its associate the banjo, being considerably smaller and with only five strings, on which account it is called *Cinco*. Still, it is a very noisy little instrument, all its cords being made to resound at once by running the fingers of the right hand up and down over them, while those of the left stop them at the right moment.

The dancers do not grapple with each other, as is

the practice among some of the more enlightened, but dance alone, joining hands occasionally for a few moments, and then separating and whirling round by themselves. First, a woman paces round the room in double-quick step, looking for a partner; when a suitable one is found, a graceful waving of the handkerchief summons him before her; then both go through their evolutions until the woman chooses to withdraw. The man then with a polite bow invites a second partner, and so on to the end of the first dance. This is styled the *Galeron*, in which only the most skilful dancers take part, as it requires great flexibility of joint and limb to execute all the intricate and graceful posturings and swayings of the body, constituting the principal charm of the performance. They have a variety of other dances, such as *La Maricela*, *El Raspon*, *La Zapa*, &c., all of which, however, are of the same character, the chief difference being in the *double entendre* of the stanzas sung as accompaniment to the music. *La Maricela*, especially, is a very exciting dance, from the satirical *bon mots* hurled by the bard of the evening at each couple as they pass. The facility with which these verses are improvised is most amusing, and would even astonish the most accomplished Neapolitan *improvisatore*. Some of them are capital hits upon the personal appearance, &c., of the dancers, and none fail to find some point for ridicule.

Three or four days we sojourned among these jolly people, and then again set out for the scene of our future adventures, stopping for the night at San

Jaime, once a thriving town, but now nearly deserted in consequence of the desolating civil wars which have afflicted the country for several years. On our way thither, we traversed a succession of beautiful prairies, bound by rings of magnificent forest trees, and watered by numerous creeks and lagoons filled with water fowl. Unlike the dreary wastes we had already crossed, which, "like the ocean, fill the imagination with the idea of infinity," the plains stretching between the Portuguesa and Apure rivers are characterized by the rankness and luxuriance of the vegetation. Owing to the periodical inundation, the landscape wears here the green mantle of spring even during the hottest months.

This yearly inundation is one of the most curious phenomena of this region. At the approach of the rainy season, those two magnificent offsprings of the Sierra Nevada, the Apure and Portuguesa, tired as it were of their long repose, suddenly rise in their heated, muddy beds, and leap over their borders, at first in playful gambols; then in fearful and rapid course, converting these widely extended plains into a vast lagoon. To the few spots which escape the general submersion, the inhabitants retire with their chattels and flocks in canoes held in readiness for the purpose.

Thus the land is kept in a state of constant irrigation and fertility unsurpassed in any country, although at the expense of the comfort of the inhabitants, who are compelled to abandon their homes to the crocodiles and anacondas of the stream. When the waters subside, the intruders are expelled by the rightful

owners of the dwellings; the few articles of furniture they possess replaced in the damp rooms, and they again devote themselves to domestic pursuits until the next inundation forces them anew to seek a home elsewhere. I was shown at the pass the marks left by the water on the walls of the cottages, indicating in some instances a rise of twelve feet.

I was struck with the size and luxuriance of the trees along the course of these rivers. My attention was particularly attracted by the *saman*, a species of Mimosa, with delicate, feathery flowers of a pinkish hue, and gigantic, umbrella-shaped boughs. There is in the valleys of Aragua one of these which, from time immemorial, has elicited the admiration of travellers, and received the protection of the law since the discovery and settlement of the country, for its magnificent proportions and the great age which it is supposed to have attained.

Extensive tracts of land are entirely taken up by individuals of this class. It would be impossible to conceive any thing more grand in nature than a forest of these trees. It might be said of them that each is a forest in itself; and were all the beautiful parasites that cling to their trunks and branches for support spread upon the ground, they would cover several acres. All along the course of the great rivers Apure, Guarico, and Portuguesa, the *saman* is found in such countless numbers that the combined fleets of the civilized world might be reconstructed from this inexhaustible supply. The axe of the northerner could readily convert those stupendous forests into vehicles

of commerce and civilization, were it not for the wasting fevers, endemic of that region. Now they only serve as protective haunts for desperate bands of robbers and cut-throats, let loose by unprincipled politicians.

Equally rank and luxuriant are the grasses in these alluvial lands. We were compelled to drive before us all the relay horses and other beasts of burden to open a passage and save our bare feet from being dreadfully lacerated by the *gamelote*, a tall, cutting, and worthless grass, with blades almost as sharp as a "Toledo." It grows so closely and rapidly as to obliterate in a few days the paths made by travellers, killing every other species in its way. Unfortunately, it is perfectly useless as fodder, except for *Chigüires* or water-hogs, which feed on it when nothing better offers, and to the flesh of which it imparts its disagreeable flavor; the *gamelote* is therefore consigned to the flames as soon as it is ripe enough to burn, which it does with as much seeming fury as

it displayed against the feet and legs of travellers in its green days.

On the second night of our journey, we pitched our camp near several ponds, literally crowded with alligators and fish and water fowl of all varieties, which kept up a continual strife, to our great discomfort. Not only was the water rendered noxious by the numerous creatures in it, but even the air was filled with the effluvium and mosquitoes arising therefrom. We were compelled to dig wells in the vicinity of the lagoons to obtain water for our use; but no artifice could shield us from the unmerciful attacks of the mosquitoes, especially the kind called *pullones*, from the length and strength of the proboscis. We tried in vain to escape their painful sting by rolling ourselves from head to foot in our ponchos and hammocks, at the peril of suffocation; the needle-like proboscis of the insects actually penetrated through the folds of our covering so as to draw blood. Nor would the smoke of the blazing fires around the camp drive them off, as was anticipated. Fortunately, they only paid us an early visit, retiring all at once before midnight, and leaving us to the tender mercies of their kinsfolk, the noisy mosquitoes or *zancudos*. These, although not so tormenting with their sting, were none the less so with their music, while no part of our bodies could be left uncovered without being instantly besieged by swarms of these "howling-insect wolves." This, however, was the only occasion upon which we were troubled by mosquitoes during our journey, as they only appear in force during the rainy season.

I noticed here for the first time a low range of hills or *médanos*, mere accumulations of sand tossed from place to place by the winds across the boundless plain; to-day, they rise above the surrounding prairies; to-morrow, they are levelled with the dust of the savannas: fit emblem of the ephemeral republics of the South! These *médanos* had been overrun by the *gamelote*, giving them the character of permanent hills, from which the place takes the name of Medanos de San Martin.

It is scarcely necessary to say that there was no temptation to prolong our stay there longer than was needed by our horses, who revelled all night in the fine meadows around the lagoons. Packing up once more, we bade adieu to that inhospitable encampment long before daylight.

Struggling through miles of *gamelote*, we reached the cattle farm of Corozito towards noon. Don Luciano Samuel, the proprietor, extended to us the hospitalities of his demesne with the characteristic grace and frankness of the people in those regions. From thence to the Pass of Apurito, on the river Apure, was only a few hours' ride; and the morning being the best time for crossing the river with our animals, we rose early in order to reach it before the breeze should commence blowing.

Owing to the thick vegetation on its banks, we did not discover the river until we were close upon it; and then, with what delight did I again view the broad surface of this magnificent stream!

Although born near its shores, I had but a faint recollection of its broad expanse. Perhaps its turbu-

lent waves had rocked my raw-hide cradle during one of the periodical inundations; for, from earliest childhood, I have borne marks left by the teeth of the *caribe*.

What glorious recollections of the fierce contest for liberty did its waters bring to memory! Not the lordly Thames, with its "woven-winged" argosies, teeming with the merchandise of the earth; the enchanting Delaware, framed in romantic cottages and orchard groves; nor yet the splendid Hudson, renowned for its floating palaces and legends, but more, that on its banks nestles the home of Irving, awakened in my breast such emotions of heartfelt admiration as did this silent messenger from the Sierra Nevada! There, amidst the thunders of the Heavens and rolling avalanches, it takes its rise, precipitately descending to the plain below through a succession of frightful leaps, which shake the primeval forest to its very foundations. And so it comes, that its surface is often loaded with an immense accumulation of fallen trees from the various zones of vegetation it traverses in its course. Thus the delicate ferns and other Alpine plants are commingled with those of the burning climes below, and finally deposited in the wide estuary forming the delta of the Orinoco. When future generations shall disentomb them in a petrified state, their geologists will no doubt attribute this singular agglomeration to wonderful changes in the temperature of the earth.

The river Apure, properly speaking, is formed by the confluence of two other streams, the Sarare and Uribante. The former has its rise among the New

Granadian range of mountains, although a great portion of its waters flow now into the Arauca, consequent on the great deposits of sand and drift wood accumulating at its mouth.

The Uribante, or Upper Apure, may be considered the main channel of this river, with a total length of six hundred and forty miles, five hundred and sixty-four of which are navigable for large vessels. It takes the name of Apure after its junction with the Sarare; but is again subdivided into several ramifications called *caños* or creeks, each of which has a particular name; among them, La Ebilla, Apurito and Apure-Seco are the most important; these again unite with the main channel, and form islands of surprising fertility. These islands are invaluable as *potreros* for the cattle, when other parts of the country are parched with the droughts of summer, the steep banks and wide channels of the rivers serving as the most effectual barriers against their roaming propensities.

The geographical situation of this river, joined as it is to one of the greatest tributaries of the wide ocean—the Orinoco—at a point nearly five hundred miles from its confluence with the sea, stamps it as one of the most important lines of internal navigation in the world, and points to the wild region of the Llanos as a future emporium of civilization. To it all the products and other natural sources of wealth from the adjoining provinces will be brought for immediate exportation to foreign markets; as, in addition to the vast area of level country traversed by it, this river receives the tribute of a hundred navigable streams

descending from the eastern slope of the Andes of New Granada and Venezuela.

The width of the Apure varies considerably according to the seasons of rains and droughts; sometimes extending miles beyond its actual channel, but usually not less than one thousand yards broad. Humboldt, who measured it at San Fernando in the month of May, when it had receded to its lowest ebb, found it to be two hundred and thirty-six toises broad; higher up it is considerably wider, gradually diminishing as it approaches its great confluent. Alluding to this singular phenomenon, mostly caused by evaporation and infiltrations through the dry, sandy banks of the river, the same eminent traveller elucidates some curious facts worthy of notice. He says: "Some idea of the magnitude of these effects may be formed, from the fact that we found the heat of the dry sands at different hours of the day from 36° to 52°,* and that of sands covered with three or four inches of water 32°. The beds of rivers are heated as far as the depth to which the solar rays can penetrate, without undergoing too great an expansion in their passage through the superincumbent strata of water. Besides, filtration extends in a lateral direction far beyond the bed of the river. The shore, which appears dry to us, imbibes water as far up as to the level of the surface of the river. We saw water gush out at the distance of fifty toises from the shore, every time that the Indians struck their oars into the ground. Now, these sands, wet below but

* Centigrade Thermom.=97° to 126° Fah.

dry above, and exposed to the solar rays, act like sponges, and lose the infiltrated water every instant by evaporation. The vapor that is emitted traverses the upper stratum of sand strongly heated, and becomes sensible to the eye when the air cools towards evening. As the beach dries, it draws from the river new portions of water; and it may be easily conceived that this continual alternation of vaporization and lateral absorption must cause an immense loss, difficult to submit to exact calculation. The increase of these losses would be in proportion to the length of the course of the rivers, if from their source to their mouth they were equally surrounded by a flat shore; but these shores being formed by deposits from the water, and the water having less velocity in proportion as it is more remote from its source, throwing down more sediment in the lower than in the upper part of its course, many rivers in hot climates undergo a diminution in the quantity of their water as they approach their outlets. Mr. Barrow observed these curious effects of sands in the southern part of Africa, on the banks of the Orange river. They have also become the subject of a very important discussion in the various hypotheses that have been formed respecting the course of the Niger."

At the time we crossed the Apure, it was considerably below the average width, as we were then in the midst of the dry season; nevertheless, it presented a formidable obstacle to our progress. There being only one canoe at the pass, the whole morning was spent in the transportation of our bulky riding-gear and luggage; and the breeze setting in shortly after

our arrival, the passage of the horses was postponed until noon, in consequence of the agitated state of the water. It would have been rather hazardous to expose our valuable steeds to the "chopping sea," which, beating against the animals' nostrils, is apt to stop their respiration, and as they then lose their steadiness in swimming, are rendered liable to be drowned.

We were met on the opposite bank of the river by a committee of gentlemen in their shirt sleeves, like ourselves, commissioned by the inhabitants of Apurito to tender our Leader the hospitalities of their village. Prominent among them was the general overseer of his estate, Commandant Rávago, a tough, wiry, and weather-beaten individual, whose nose Nature had made of an unjustifiable length, and who discoursed in a language peculiar to himself. Indeed, it required one to be well versed in the jargon of the Llanos to understand his dissertations upon matters and things in general; for he pretended to be a connoisseur in every thing, except languages; the English, especially, was peculiarly distasteful to his ears, and whenever he heard us conversing in that tongue, he declared in his patois, that it reminded him of a pack of horses neighing to each other. Notwithstanding his uncouth manner and appearance, our overseer was a very shrewd fellow, and quite *au fait* in all matters appertaining to cattle farms.

As for the village or port of Apurito, it was a mere assemblage of mud-plastered cottages, thatched, like all houses in that region, with palm leaves. Some of them had doors and windows of planed

boards; but the greater part were free to whoever and whatever chose to walk or *crawl* into them; no church, no school-house, no building devoted to public meetings of any sort. The Alcalde, that most important functionary in small Spanish communities, held his audiences in the narrow corridor of his hut, while the *sala* was devoted to the all-absorbing game of *monte*. Once a year the Padre, next in importance to his Honor the Alcalde, paid a visit to the village, when all the boys and girls who had not been baptized were brought before him at his lodgings, where the ceremony was performed in a somewhat informal manner, and without special regard being paid to the strict injunctions of the Church. There were a few storehouses scattered along the banks of the river, where all business transactions were carried on. These were principally in hides, which are given in exchange for the few articles of barter brought from the Orinoco. Hides, in fact, are the bank notes of the Llanos; and although rather voluminous and uncleanly, they change hands as readily as any "paper" that was ever in "the market." These are taken to Ciudad Bolivar, formerly Angostura, in bongos and one-mast sailing vessels called *lanchas*, which return laden with salt, knives, blankets, and printed calicoes, articles of prime necessity among the inhabitants. Other ports along the Apure, such as Nutrias and San Fernando, carry on a very extensive trade in these goods. The first-named town adds largely to her exports, bringing in the agricultural products of the adjoining province of Barinas. These are coffee, cacao, indigo, and tobacco; the last being

highly prized in Germany for meerschaums, and always obtaining a ready sale at Bolivar.

The course of the Apure being nearly in a straight line from west to east, the trade winds blowing across the plains in the summer season play a very important part in propelling, even against the current, the heaviest craft sailing up the river. During the rainy season, the westerly winds combine with the current of the stream in expediting the progress of vessels. Of late, several steamboats have been added to those already engaged in this traffic; and I am told are doing a very profitable business. God speed them!

"During the time of great floods," writes Humboldt, "the inhabitants of these countries, to avoid the force of the currents, and the danger arising from the trunks of trees which these currents bring down, instead of ascending the beds of rivers in their boats, cross the savannas. To go from San Fernando to the villages of San Juan de Payara, San Rafael de Atamaica, or San Francisco de Capanaparo, they direct their course due south, as if they were crossing a single river of twenty leagues broad. The junctions of the Guarico, the Apure, the Cabullare, and the Arauca with the Orinoco, form, at a hundred and sixty leagues from the coast of Guiana, a kind of interior delta, of which hydrography furnishes few examples in the Old World. According to the height of the mercury in the barometer, the waters of the Apure have only a fall of thirty-four toises from San Fernando to the sea. The fall from the mouths of

the Osage and the Missouri to the bar of the Mississippi is not more considerable. The savannas of Lower Louisiana everywhere remind us of the savannas of the Lower Orinoco."—*Travels to the Equinoxial Regions.*

CHAPTER X.

SAVANNAS OF APURE.

After a thorough examination of animals and baggage, to see that all was as it ought to be, we left the uninteresting village of Apurito for our cattle-estate of San Pablo de Apure, a few miles further south. As we passed the last house fronting the river, Mr. Thomas descried a jaguar-skin, which the owner of the hut had spread to dry upon the fence. Wishing to examine it more closely, he spurred his mule ahead and was in the act of seizing the skin, when the animal, whose view of it had until then been obstructed by the other beasts, coming unexpectedly into close proximity with the—to him—fearful object, drew back in terror, snorting, kicking, and plunging so violently as to capsize the unlucky artist upon the sandy beach. The abhorrence with which mules regard the South American tiger, is one of the most curious phenomena of animal instinct with which I am acquainted; not only do they manifest it at sight

of the creature, but also by their scent, while the animal is still a long distance off, and yet, in most cases, they have never seen a tiger, as was the case in the present instance, this mule having been reared in the *potreros* of San Pablo de Paya, where tigers are rarely, if ever, met with.

After a ride of a few hours through alternate glades of gigantic mimosas and verdant savannas, we reached San Pablo before night had cast her gloom over those solemn wilds. The house was neat and well located, commanding an extended view of the country and innumerable herds of cattle grazing in the distance. There were, besides, a large *caney* or barracoon for the accommodation of the men and their chattels, and a detached hut in which the culinary functions of the establishment were to be performed.

The appellation of San Pablo, conferred on this farm also—although the owner possessed already another of the same name—made me suspect that snakes were not uncommon in that country, the reality of which fact I ascertained the first time that I strolled any considerable distance from the house. In a country where saints are supposed to exert an unbounded influence over all human affairs, it is not unusual to give to houses and localities, threatened with some special calamity, the name of the saint who is considered the patron or defender from that particular evil: thus places which are frequently visited by thunderstorms, are called after Santa Barbara; those infested with snakes, receive the name of San Pablo, &c., &c.

Although this farm formed part of the demesne we came to inspect, we did not remain there longer than

was absolutely necessary to investigate into its general condition.

When the order was given to remove to El Frio—another farm further westward—we gladly saddled horses and started off at a brisk pace over those fresh and beautiful prairies which, with their perpetual grassy carpet, caused us to feel as if we were coming into a land of promise and contentment, instead of one of toil and hardship. Indeed, every thing denoted that we were now entering on far different scenes from those we had left across the river. It seemed a terrestrial paradise, where a beneficent Providence had congregated every animal most needed by man. Now it was the slender forms of deer in herds bounding swiftly over the greensward; now the gristly wild hogs and capyvaras making hastily for the nearest swamp to avoid the eager chase of our men. Occasionally might be seen a redoubtable wild bull, retiring sulkily and slowly at the head of his shaggy troop, as if wishing to dispute our right to enter his domain. Vegetation, however, seemed to flourish here less than in other places we had visited, as, excepting a few scattered palms of a new variety, and some straggling Matas—which, from the mirage continually before us, appeared like fairy groves set in clearest water—nothing but the fine and level lawn met the eye for many miles.

Unlike the higher plains, where only a coarse herbage predominates, the savannas of Apure are characterized by a luxuriant growth of various grasses, which, like those of the Portuguesa, preserve a uniform verdure throughout the year. These grasses—

some of which are as soft and pliable as silk—are most important in the economy of cattle-breeding in the savannas watered by the Apure and its tributaries. The prodigious increase of animals in these plains is mainly owing to the superiority of the pastures over those of the upper regions of the Llanos, from whence the farmer is compelled to migrate with his stock every summer.

I noticed in Apure three varieties of grass, which in richness of flavor and nutritious qualities can hardly be surpassed by any other fodder plants of the temperate zones. In the early part of the rainy season, the granadilla—a grass reaching to about four feet in height, with tender succulent blades and panicles of seed not unlike some varieties of broomcorn—starts with the earliest showers of spring. It grows with great rapidity, and is greedily sought by all ruminants; but being an annual, soon disappears, leaving no vestige of its existence. In the alluvial bottom-lands subject to the periodical inundation, two other grasses, no less esteemed for their nutriment, have an uninterrupted growth and luxuriance which the hottest season cannot blast; these are, the *carretera*, named from the beautiful prairie-goose that feeds on it, and the *lambedora*, so termed on account of its softness, animals feeding on it appearing to lick rather than masticate it. Cattle and horses thrive on it very perceptibly, and even calves only a fortnight old, may be left to shift for themselves amidst those nutritious pastures.

Esteros is the name by which these perennial meadows are there designated. They have moreover the

advantage of retaining water enough throughout the year to make them the resort of all kinds of quadrupeds and of every fowl whom "Nature has taught to dip the wing in water," the former to allay their thirst and feast on the fine grass, and the latter for the purpose of raising their young in the vicinity of ponds well stocked with fish of all varieties.

No description can convey a just idea of the appearance presented by these lagoons, crowded with almost every variety of animal. The birds in particular—most of which belong to the extensive family of cranes—seem to have migrated there from all quarters of the globe. These fluttering communities of aquatic birds are known in the country under the appropriate name of *garzeros*, from the many *garzas*—herons—predominating in them. The immense number of these may be conceived from the fact that their colonies sometimes embrace several miles in extent. I noticed there also various kinds of cranes—*garzones*—one of them, called the soldier, from its erect bearing and martial air—is over five feet in height, with a bill fully a foot long. The *garzas* were of various sizes and colors, some snow-white, some a delicate blue, others gray or pink, and many of a brilliant scarlet. Although cranes and herons are species very nearly allied, yet they verify the old saying, "birds of a feather flock together," for each keeps quite distinct from the other. They generally select the spreading top of a low bush—*caujaro*—growing in vast quantities near the water, in which to build their nests; these are of dry sticks very ingeniously interwoven among the branches. Well-beaten tracks are

made under the bushes by the tramp of many suspicious characters of the feline tribe, who make these feathered colonies their favorite resort, where they improve every opportunity of appropriating any young birds that may chance to fall from the nests.

As we rode past several ponds, covered with a kind of water-lily, whose flowers are of a dark purple color, myriads of ducks, of the small species called *güiriries*, rose in the air, actually for the moment obscuring the sun. They uttered a shrill note, clearly repeating the sound from which they are named, so that the hunter easily discovers their whereabout. There were, besides, great numbers of a larger species of duck—the *pato real*, or royal duck—so named, I presume, from a graceful tuft of black feathers with which it is crowned. Here and there a brace of *carreteros* soared over head, uttering their peculiar rolling notes; the hoarse quacking of the male bird, followed by the shrill cries of the female, make perfect the before-mentioned resemblance to the rumbling of cartwheels.

During the moulting season, the people in the neighborhood of these lagoons resort to them from time to time, and drive without difficulty towards the farm-house as many of these ducks as they may desire. I was assured by several reliable individuals that not far from San Pablo there is a lagoon on the borders of which a regiment of cavalry once encamped, and lived during a fortnight exclusively on these birds, without any apparent diminution of their numbers.

This prodigious exuberance of animal life has justly entitled the Apure to the reputation of being

a land of plenty; but, alas, it is also a land of death! as, from the bottom of these extensive marshes miasmas of a pestilential nature are continually arising, which, at certain seasons of the year, render this fine country almost uninhabitable for man. They are also the abode of those enormous water-snakes or anacondas, known in the country under the name of *culebras de agua*, in contradistinction to the boa constrictor or *traga-venado*, so termed on account of the ease with which it gorges itself with a whole deer at once. Both of these snakes are also remarkable for the strength which enables them to crush their victims in the coils of their huge muscular bodies; but the anaconda is by far the more voracious and bold of the two, attacking not only inferior animals, such as deer, capyvaras, and young calves, but even that pride of the herd, the *padrote*, cannot always escape the deadly embrace. Woe to the unsuspecting colt or heifer, who, panting with thirst and heat, should incautiously plunge into one of these modern Stygian lakes, for the coil of the monster will in an instant be around it, followed by a fearful cracking of its bones. This accomplished, the snake proceeds to cover the whole mangled body with a slimy secretion from his mouth which assists him in the process of deglutition. Should it be a stag—the head of which presents the formidable obstacle of its huge antlers—the snake commences by swallowing first the hind quarters, trusting to time and the natural process of decay for the head to drop off. In this plight the anaconda is often found, looking like an immense log, stretched out in the soft mud of lagoons, whence they are then easily

dragged by means of a lazo, tied to the tail of a horse. On examining the mouth of one of these snakes, it will be found that the jaws are furnished with a row of sharp and crooked teeth, bent inward like tenter hooks; with these he seizes his prey, and holds it securely until the victim, unable to struggle longer, drops exhausted. What appears most extraordinary in these unequal contests, is the tenacity with which the snake adheres to the soft mud of the lagoon, there being neither rock nor stump to which he can secure himself. Nor will the efforts of a large bull, no matter how powerful, be sufficient to drag the snake one inch out of his element, unless he is first cut asunder. In darting upon a quadruped, the anaconda invariably aims at its snout, the animal seldom escaping when once the terrible fangs have been buried in its flesh. It is not an unusual thing, however, for a bull to cut a snake asunder in his violent struggles; then the shaggy victor may be seen proudly marching at the head of his troop with this unsightly trophy hanging from his nose. The toughness of the anaconda's skin makes it eagerly sought after by the inhabitants for straps and various other objects susceptible of injury from friction, as they outwear those made from any other material. The fat is also much esteemed for burning, and as a lubricator for the bones and tendons of persons afflicted with rheumatism, or rigidity of limb. This oil is perfectly clear and transparent, without any disagreeable odor, and is readily absorbed into the system by simply rubbing it on the skin.

Shortly after leaving San Pablo, we had a spirited

chase after a herd of wild pigs. There were upwards of twenty browsing on the borders of a pond, and in an instant the whole plain—in such repose a few moments before—resounded with the cries and clatter of our horsemen in eager pursuit of this delicious game of the Llanos. Many of the men being provided with lances, they had no difficulty in despatching most of those whose fate threw them in the way of the remorseless cavaliers. But an old *berraco* or boar, which seemed to be the sultan of the grisly community, harassed by the combined attacks of several horsemen, suddenly whirled round and made a gallant stand, determined, as it appeared, not to give up without a fierce resistance. At first it was supposed that three or four men would be sufficient to bring him down, and that number were accordingly sent after him; but finding the engagement protracted, several others, including myself, went to their assistance. On reaching the spot a fearful spectacle was presented to us. The infuriated animal, his eyes shooting fire, and fiercely grinding his tusks, stood at bay a short distance from his aggressors, his mouth covered with a bloody froth, while one of the men lay bleeding profusely from a wound on the thigh inflicted by the sharp tusks of the boar. We learned that Cipriano, the wounded hunter's name, perceiving that the lances of his companions only succeeded in irritating the boar, very foolishly leaped from his saddle, and drawing his sword, deliberately attacked him without even taking the precaution of covering his movements with the sheepskin from his saddle, as is practised in contests with wild bulls. The man

boasted with reason of being the most skilful matador in all the Apure; but in this case he did not reckon on the tough hide of his opponent; for, at the first rush of the boar upon him, and in spite of the steadiness with which he aimed the stroke, the well-tempered steel bent like a reed the moment it encountered the shoulder of the boar, leaving Cipriano completely at the mercy of the enraged brute. The consequence, as I have already stated, was a severe gash, almost laying bare the femoral bone of the unfortunate matador. The tusks of the wild boar, especially those of the lower jaw, are so long and sharp, that the animal makes use of them as a bull does of his horns. The upper ones rest directly upon the lower, and his constant grinding of them, especially when he is enraged, soon wears the points into a broad and sharp edge. United, these tusks form a perfect circle five or six inches in diameter. The services of our surgeon, Dr. Gallegos, were immediately called into requisition, who dressed the wound, while the companions of the suffering hunter endeavored to avenge him. They rained a shower of lances upon the body of the enraged beast, but, apparently, with no better effect; for, with one powerful stroke of his tusks, he broke in two the shaft of some and carried away the head of others. Doubtless we should have succeeded in finishing him after a time; but the helpless condition of our companion requiring especial care, we placed him on his saddle, for want of better conveyance, and, leaving the boar conqueror, proceeded on our journey.

Having killed more animals than we could conveniently carry, we selected two fat sows for our

breakfast, and left the remainder to the flock of turkey-buzzards which, like a troop of hungry scavengers, followed our line of march across the prairies.

I may observe here that the wild boar of the Llanos is the common hog run wild in consequence of the little or no care bestowed upon their breeding in the cattle-farms, and as they find in these swamps all the elements they require for their development, viz., roots of various kinds, sweet herbs, eels, snakes, and mire *ad libitum*, their propagation is greatly increased. Thus the number of pigs in these savannas is almost incredible—in the lands of El Frio alone being estimated at forty thousand—and a just idea may be formed of their ravages from the fact that, for miles around, those fine prairies have been completely ploughed up by them, rendering the ground exceedingly dangerous for horses, and almost useless for cattle-breeding, by destroying the fine pastures which are invariably replaced by a crop of worthless weeds.

Wild hogs, nevertheless, sometimes render good service by destroying the snakes—for which they seem to have a particular penchant—especially that little scourge of the savannas of Apure, the dreaded *mata-caballo*.

The tails of these hogs being especially long, and, as usual, twisted, they swing them round continually when running—a peculiarity which did not escape a benighted son of Africa, who was being trained at a cattle-farm to the business of the Llanos, and which occasioned quite a ludicrous scene at one of these hunts. He had become already expert in the use of the lazo, and was one day taken to the savanna

by the overseer for the purpose of procuring an ox for slaughter, when they fell in with a fine hog, which at once changed their plans, and they immediately gave him chase. None of the men had lazos, except the negro, and he was therefore commanded to follow and secure the game; but although he rode a very swift horse, and was often within range of the lazo, he was observed each time to slacken his pace without any apparent cause. "Now then, ... son of . . . . . thy mother," the Llanero vociferated, "let go the lazo, or we will roast thee alive in his stead," shouting at him also many other no less characteristic expressions. But Sambo, waving the lazo over his head in order to keep the noose open, would again stop short of his mark, until the pig, who probably knew by this time that he was wanted, straining every nerve to reach a swamp hard by, succeeded at last in gaining a clump of wild plantains that bordered the *estero*. Here the major-domo, losing his small remnant of patience, quickly rode up to him, and discharging sundry lashes with his *chaparro* upon the sooty skin of his apprentice, asked him, in a thundering voice: "How now, *my master*, why did ye let the fellow go without a single effort on thy part to secure him? Have not I taught thee well enough how to handle a lazo, thou sooty imp?" "Oh! yessa, massa," quoth the darkey; "but, look yer, massa, when me wisher to lazo pig, him wisher to lazo me neither;" imitating, at the same time, with his arm the swinging of the pig's tail.

Very beautiful was the appearance of the many herds, each headed by its *padrote*, on all sides dispers-

ing at our approach. The bulls are generally of a grave and quiet disposition when collected in herds, and rather avoid the approach of man unless provoked to self-defence, when they become very ferocious. Each troop is under the control of the most powerful bull in the drove, a position which is only attained by dint of strength and courage; as not only has he to defend his troop from the attacks of the common enemy, but to maintain his supremacy against rival enamorados. Thus the *padrote*, or big father, as he is appropriately styled, can show many scars upon his tough hide, received in these fierce combats. If a lion or jaguar approach during the night, the *padrote* immediately takes all his measures for the defence of his post. His first care is to compel the herd into a compact mass, and then advances to engage the enemy in single combat, from which he rarely fails to come off victorious. In the mean time the herd, within the limited space into which they have been congregated, with heads lowered towards the enemy, prepare to repulse the intruder and defend their young by a formidable array of horns.

Man is the only antagonist whose superiority the *padrote* will acknowledge; but even this is not without an obstinate resistance whenever he has an opportunity. Nor will he retire in a hurry from his pursuers, but facing about from time to time, often succeeds in thwarting their intentions and securing an honorable retreat.

When the sun is high in the meridian, troops of these noble animals may be seen slowly advancing towards the nearest *mata*, seeking to avoid the exces-

sive heat of the day and to enjoy their siesta in cool retirement. Here they amuse themselves sometimes in watching over their harems, sometimes in making their toilet, which is rubbing the point of their horns against the hard trunk of a palm tree, or any other convenient object, until they become sharp as awls. Woe! then, to the imprudent traveller who, overpowered by the heat, seeks refuge in one of those groves, thus intruding upon the sanctuary of his bullship's seraglio. Should he succeed in escaping safe and sound, his horse is certain of being severely chastised for his master's indiscretion.

An adventurous Briton, who once penetrated into one of those haunts sacred to Taurus, came very near losing his life in consequence. He fortunately escaped with only a few scratches and contusions; but his clothes were torn from his body by the horns and hoofs of the bull. It chanced in this wise: The intensity of the sun's rays had compelled the traveller and his companion—a shrewd old Llanero, who acted as guide—to seek shelter under a solitary grove. On a closer acquaintance they judged it to be the retreat of a wild bull, from the deep scars observable on the bark of the trees, evidently caused by some animal's horns. They were not mistaken, for they soon discovered at a short distance, quietly grazing, the probable owner of the rural retreat. Knowing from experience that this would be a very unsafe spot for their siesta, the Llanero advised that they should move off at once, rather than be ejected thence, as would surely be the case if they remained much longer. But John Bull, with characteristic pride, and trusting entirely

to his fine brace of pistols, laughed at the idea of giving up his comfortable quarters, without at least a struggle for their possession. Ordering the man to sling his hammock, he carefully examined his pistols, after which he retired to his aërial couch. The Llanero shook his head and very wisely omitted unsaddling the horses, contenting himself with merely unfastening the straps. Presently the bull began to advance in the direction of the *mata*, which the phlegmatic Englishman no sooner perceived, than quitting his hammock, he seized his pistols and went to the encounter. The Llanero crossed himself, and taking the horses aside, proceeded to secure the saddles and to tie the lazo to the tail of his own steed. In the mean time the bull continued leisurely advancing, apparently without much noticing his uninvited guests; occasionally, however, uttering deep bellowings expressive of his displeasure. Bang! bang! went the two pistols; but before the smoke had cleared, the Llanero beheld his companion stretched upon the ground and fiercely trampled under the feet of the infuriated animal. Swift as thought, the Llanero sprang into the saddle, and spreading his lazo, whirled it two or three times above his head; then let it fall around the horns of the bull at the very instant he was about to transfix the prostrate traveller. Thus providentially prevented from doing further injury, he was easily hamstrung and finally despatched by the captors. That the Englishman escaped being instantly killed, can only be accounted for by the fact that a bull often misses his aim from the very fury of his attack.

CHAPTER XI.

EL FRIO.

On arriving at El Frio, we were agreeably surprised at finding more spacious accommodations than we had anticipated. The house, although thatched like all the rest with palm leaves, was spacious and well built of *pajareque;* that is, the framework of the walls was of strong posts of timber, well lathed and plastered over with soft mud mixed with straw. In addition to a large *sala* or reception room, it contained three or four sleeping apartments; but these last were so full of bats, that it was impossible to pass a comfortable night in them, especially on account of the disagreeable odor proceeding from these disgusting creatures, while the incessant bird-like chirping sound which they made overhead, completely murdered our first night's sleep. We tried in vain to smoke them out by means of dried cow dung. They absented themselves during a portion of the day, but were sure to return at dusk, bringing with them an abundant supply of wild berries for their supper, some of which they were constantly dropping in our

hammocks, finally compelling us to seek refuge in the open air of the corridors and courtyard.

Apart from the mansion stood a row of smaller structures containing the kitchen and storerooms of the farm, which being useless to us, we abandoned to the bats and turkey-buzzards. Our cooking, as usual, was left to our skilful *chef* Mónico and his satellites, who preferred the *sans façon* style of the camp to confining themselves in the narrow range of a kitchen.

That which chiefly attracted my attention at this farm was the substantial nature of the fence encompassing the buildings, capable of resisting not only the sudden rush of a herd of cattle, for which purpose it was intended, but also a heavy cannonade, in case of need. It was constructed of enormous blocks of trees, almost impervious to steel or fire, driven into the ground, each as close to the other as possible, and neatly trimmed at top so as to present an even surface. I was unable to comprehend by what means those monster rails could have been removed from the forest. This, I afterwards ascertained, had been accomplished during the inundation of the savannas, when they are easily transported in *balsas* or rafts made of lighter wood. The trees yielding this everlasting timber are two distinct species of acacias, known in the country under the euphonious names of *Angelino* and *Acapro*, either of which will turn the edge of the best tempered steel if great care is not used. I was shown here two uprights to the principal gate of the *majada* or great enclosure for cattle, nearly a hundred years old, still in perfect preserva-

tion, although standing in soil subject to alternate inundations and parching heats.

The *majada*, also formed of strong posts, was sufficiently spacious to contain three thousand animals, with compartments for the accommodation of the herds during the various operations of cattle farms. Although there was abundant vegetable material for the comfort or security of the inmates, I observed here, as everywhere, a total want of shade trees around the houses. The Llaneros, although strongly addicted to the "sweets of savage life," are decidedly opposed to trees in the immediate neighborhood of their dwellings. Trees, say they, attract the thunderbolt of heaven and the wild beasts of the field, being besides the natural refuge of snakes and mosquitoes during the great floods. This lack of shade was the more regretted by us as we were then in the midst of the summer solstice, when the sun pours its vertical rays upon the dry soil, while each day between the hours of ten and eleven, a strong breeze arose, sweeping over the exposed plain, and bringing with it showers of sand; this lodged in our mouths, eyes and ears, and mingled with the food, thus rendering it unpalatable even to our carnivorous appetites. And yet, but a short distance from the house bloomed an inviting grove, two or three miles in circumference; this a man of taste could have readily converted into a delightful abode, especially as in the rainy season the inundation of the surrounding savannas would permit the approach of vessels from the Orinoco, by which the owner could supply himself with all the comforts of civilized life. This charming spot was

further embellished by a small lake, where we daily watered our horses, though not without some risk to life and limb on account of the *babas* and caimans swarming in its depths. Even the shallower portions were so filled with sting-rays, caribes, and other aquatic vermin, as to render bathing in it extremely hazardous. Our ablutions, therefore, were limited to the occasional scrubbing of our dusty and heated bodies with wet towels. The *babas*, although still more repulsive in appearance than their relative of the long snout—the crocodile—are considered a *bonne bouche*, especially the tail, the flesh of which is said to rival chicken in its flavor. From this uninviting fount of the desert, necessity compelled us to replenish our gourds each afternoon, that the particles of sand and clay with which it was filled might have time to settle during the night.

The summer breezes, although disagreeable in many respects, are yet most necessary, carrying off noxious exhalations arising from the marshy deposits which remain in those low grounds long after the waters have subsided; otherwise those regions would be uninhabitable. The Apure is especially salubrious in the dry season, and were it not for their imprudences, the inhabitants would enjoy perfect health during at least seven months of the year. But these people, careless of consequences, and trusting to their iron constitutions, are not deterred, while in the excitement of a long chase, from plunging into one of these pestiferous marshes after the object of their pursuit. The result is a severe reaction of the system, followed by violent spasms, fevers, or that most horrid

of diseases, elephantiasis or *mal de San Lazaro*, so prevalent in the hot regions of tropical America. Add to this recklessness the great want of medical resources in the country, and the consequent wretchedness and misery can be readily imagined. Nevertheless, the inhabitants seem to care so little about these endemic vicissitudes, that in time one accustoms himself also to view them in the same spirit of fatalism which they attach to every event of their lives.

I was never weary of admiring the beauty of the sky and transparency of the atmosphere at this season. Objects three or four miles distant appeared as if actually only a few rods from the beholder, a circumstance which often misled me when in my rambles after game I had to traverse the plain on foot, occasioning frequent disappointments in my reckonings.

The radiation of heat evolved from the earth at night, produced by the perfect clearness of the sky, was so great at times as to produce a very sensible degree of cold, which rendered the use of blankets quite acceptable; hence the name of *El Frio* given to this estate. The evenings, especially, were so raw and chilly, that in order to keep warm, we passed a great portion of the night in revelry and dancing by moonlight, although not one crinoline graced our soirées. But we had excellent dancers of the *Zapateo*, a sort of "breakdown," in which most of our men exhibited a flexibility of feet and ankles which would have done credit to the most accomplished Ethiopian troop.

Our host *ño* Juan Manuel, as the overseer was familiarly styled, had engaged the services of a cele-

brated player on the *bandola* from Banco Largo, and there being no lack of *improvisatori* among us, these nightly revels were conducted with all the *éclat* that circumstances would permit. Among the bards who distinguished themselves most at such times were the *Negro* Quintana, an old Sergeant of the Guard, whose constant attendance for many years on his beloved Chief and "Master," as he styled the General, had endeared him to the latter; and Sarmiento, as the other was named, who acted in the capacity of *capo-ral* to the cattle farm of San Pablo. Both of these made themselves famous by the wonderful facility with which they improvised on any given subject. They occasionally varied the performances by singing to their guitars ballads whose burden was invariably some adventure arising from the eventful life in the pampas. Of these choice morceaux the most popular were "Mambrun," an imitation of the old French song, "*Malbrook s'en fut en guerre*," and "Marcelino." The hero of this last was a renowned bandit, who for a long time baffled all efforts to capture him, but who finally received his deserts from the hands of a traitor, who joined his forays for the purpose of betraying him to his enemies.

Marcelino was a common *peon* in one of the cattle farms bordering the river Matiyure, but being of a restless and daring disposition, preferred the roving life of a bandit to the more sober occupations of the farm. Finding himself pursued by the hand of justice, he was compelled for a time to seek refuge among the Indians south of the great river Meta, who are at this day sole tenants of those immeasurable

wilds. His superior acquirements and boldness soon gained him the confidence and respect of the savages, who finally adopted him for their leader, following him in his marauding expeditions against the defenceless cattle forms this side of the Arauca. Emboldened by success, they attacked the wealthy town of that name, whence Marcelino carried off a beautiful woman, the wife of a respectable farmer of the place, who employed every means in his power to recover her. All efforts, however, were for a time fruitless, owing to the wild nature of the country and the cunning of her captor; but he was finally taken in one of his expeditions. The intention had been to send him to Achaguas, with which object he was well bound and placed under a strong escort; but being a great favorite with all classes of Llaneros, who admire valor in every form, he was finally given in charge of the famous Manuel Blanco—a rich land owner of the Apure—at the earnest solicitation of the latter, who promised to see him safely delivered to the authorities. On the way thither, however, Marcelino managed to give his bondsman the slip, and escaped to his favorite haunts again. All further attempts to retake him failing at that time, a bold sambo from the upper country volunteered to penetrate into the unknown region, intending to decoy him and his savage band to a certain cattle farm where a strong picket of cavalry would lie in wait. Having represented to Marcelino that immense wealth in money and jewels was possessed by the owners of the farm, the bandit concluded to come out of his fastness and retrieve his former fame by a bold

dash at the cattle farm of Herradero. On arriving at the place, where matters having been arranged as had been agreed upon between Maldonado—the betrayer's appropriate name—and the officers of justice, Marcelino and his band were surprised. He endeavored to escape, but Maldonado spurring his horse toward the unsuspecting bandit, pierced him with his sword. Without delaying he then pushed on, followed by the *hateros*, to the camp where the unfortunate lady was still a captive. They found her surrounded by a train of red skin dames of honor, all of whom were afterward distributed as servants among the families of their conquerors.

Nearly all the Indians of that tribe were destroyed on this occasion, only a few escaping to the Big Forest, where they bewailed among the monkeys and jaguars of those solitudes the loss of their favorite chieftain. The ballad which commemorates the event, commences:

"A Marcelino lo mataron
En el hato de Herradero,
Y los Indios lo lloraron
A su capitan vaquero."

Marcelino the bold was slain,
Slain at the farm of Herradero;
And the Indians lament in vain
Their loved sportsman, chieftain and hero.

Maldonado, who at heart was a rogue of the same stamp as Marcelino, having tasted of the independent roving life of the bandit, found it so congenial that he concluded to follow the illustrious example of his

former leader and associate; but wanting in the principal traits which had raised the latter to his exalted position, was speedily destroyed and almost precisely in the same manner which he had devised for the overthrow of the renowned Marcelino. Previous to this, however, Maldonado, in imitation of his former chieftain, and availing himself of the defenceless state of the town of Guasdualito, attempted to carry off from thence la Villafañe, a lady celebrated for her beauty. With this intent, he brought to her door a horse already saddled for her, and commanded her to mount and follow him. This she indignantly refused to do; but finding all entreaties and resistance of no avail, she seized some poison from a drawer at hand, and with resolution worthy of a Roman matron, placed it to her lips, exclaiming, as she did so, that she would surely swallow it if he did not instantly quit her presence. The threat proved successful; for the bandit, awed by her heroism, left her.

The business of the pampas required us to be up at the first peep of dawn. A cup of coffee and milk, mixed with ground parched corn—which I would recommend to all travellers on long journeys of this sort—served us until breakfast time. I amused myself during the day sketching in company with my friend, Mr. Thomas, while the men made their preparations for a grand hunt among the cattle of the estate. The most important of these arrangements was that of manufacturing from hides sufficient lazos for the sport. There is a marked difference between the skins of bullocks raised in the shady parts of the

Llanos and those roaming wild over the deserts of the Apure. Although the former are much thicker, the lazos made from the hides of cattle constantly exposed to the sun's rays are infinitely stronger. The lazo is easily made. A fresh hide, spread upon the ground with the hair downward, is neatly cut into a long strap two inches wide. This is twisted into a tight thong and stretched out to dry between two posts, after which it is well rubbed with fat. When thoroughly dried, a loop is made at one end; through this, when required for use, the thong is passed, forming the noose or lazo proper, while the other end is firmly tied to the horse's tail, using its long hair for the purpose. In other parts of South America they fasten the lazo to a ring in the saddle; but this arrangement, besides causing too great strain upon the horse's back, is fraught with danger to the rider in case of a recoil from the thong if a break occur. The thorough training which horses receive in the Llanos is invaluable in such cases, as not only does the success of the chase depend on the readiness with which he obeys his rider, but even after the game is secured with the lazo, it is necessary that the horse should range instantly on a line with the struggling victim; but unless this is effected before the strain comes upon the lazo, the horse and his rider are inevitably overthrown. The hunter, at the moment of using the lazo, coils a portion of the thong, which he holds with his left hand, and with the rest forms the running noose, which is repeatedly whirled around his head to keep it open. When within reach of his mark, he aims at the animal's head and throws the noose in such a

manner as to cause a rapid uncoiling of the thong in his left hand. Some Llaneros are so expert as to entangle at the same instant the feet and head of the animal, on which he is quickly brought to the ground.

We were joined at El Frio by another party of cattle hunters, under the leadership of an old acquaintance, Colonel Castejon, widely celebrated in the Llanos for great bravery and skill in the pursuits of the country. He came to help us in the hunt after wild cattle, and to help himself to as many animals as he could drive home with his party. We also had the honor of a visit from the Governor of the Province, Señor Arciniega, a jovial, talkative, and well-informed functionary, and the most accomplished marksman of the Apure. It was therefore proposed to have a grand shooting match in the open field, and with this view we all started one morning for a creek called Macanillal, about three miles distant, intending to use the crocodiles, by far the most difficult animal to shoot, as targets. On entering the woody banks of the creek, we were agreeably surprised to discover on the soft mud evident proofs that we had come in the right direction, not only for our anticipated sport with the water monsters, but also that we were likely to have a brush with even a more formidable antagonist—the jaguar. Footprints of this splendid animal were so numerous, that we forgot for a time the crocodiles and made diligent search for the nobler game. We had small success, however, having no dogs with us to drive him from the jungle; for, un-

less he has the advantage over his adversaries, the jaguar never shows himself in the day-time.

As we came in sight of the water, I was astonished at seeing its whole surface bubbling as if in a state of effervescence, and at finding also on nearer inspection that this was occasioned by the blowing close to the water's surface of millions of *coporos*. Other varieties of fish were also so abundant, that we shot many near the shore, among them a very fine catfish.

The report of the guns brought to the surface numbers of crocodiles, which we prepared to assail from the high bank of the creek. To our honorable guest, the Governor, was conceded the privilege of shooting the first, which he did with great accuracy, sending a ball directly through one of the creature's eyes. Still the shot did not kill him instantly, as would have been the result with any other animal; and he plunged through the creek for a time at a furious rate, lashing the water with his powerful tail, and causing great commotion among the finny multitude. The other crocodiles in lieu of being alarmed with the uproar, were only rendered more inquisitive, dashing forward with gleaming eyes and tusks, which so fascinated my friend the English artist, as rather endangered his safety in his eagerness to get a thorough view of the reptiles. Forgetting his proximity to the precipice, he approached it so nearly as to miss his footing, and would doubtless have rolled into one of the open jaws below him, but for the prompt assistance of a companion, who caught him as he was in the act of falling.

From the same place where the first shot was fired, we succeeded in killing or wounding not less than twenty crocodiles; but the banks being high and precipitous, we could not secure the carcases. One of these, which lay stranded on a sand bank across the creek, being characterized by a singular hump on his back, which added to his already monstrous size, I felt a great desire to examine more closely. To accomplish this, it was necessary to ford the creek lower down, where I was assured the water was sufficiently low to allow of walking over. The undertaking was not, however, without considerable risk from the numerous sting-rays and caribes. But my interest in all pertaining to Nature's works helped me over to the other side, whither I was accompanied by Roseliano, a youth attached to my family, famed as a dare-devil. With his assistance I dragged the crocodile partly out of water, and was examining the load which nature had placed upon his back, when Roseliano perceived a movement of one of his eyes, the other having been shattered by the bullet; we supposed he had been by this time quite dead. My young companion, who had expressed his suspicions that the crocodile was only feigning death, wishing to ascertain the truth, proposed stabbing him in the armpit with his dagger. Before permitting this, I insisted upon securing the jaws by means of a large stake which we sharpened at one end and plunged into his nostrils, and I then leaned upon it with the whole weight of my body. This precaution saved my companion, but came very near proving fatal to myself, as the instant the crocodile felt the cold steel

between his ribs he raised his enormous head, lifting me at least a foot from the ground; but was prevented from injuring me by the stake which he caught between his powerful tusks, shattering it to splinters, and then retreated to the middle of the creek. His triumph was, however, of short duration; for, the blood oozing in torrents from his wounds, he quickly fell a prey to thousands of hungry caribes.

Sir Robert Schomburgh relates an incident which occurred during his ascent of the river Berbice, and which further demonstrates the tenacity of life in the cayman. "One was fired at, floating, and the ball took off the end of the snout; it received another immediately afterward in the hinder part of the skull which appeared to have taken effect; still, the Indians were not sparing in their blows, and when there was not much likelihood of its possessing a spark of life, it was deposited on the bow of one of the corials. While the corial was drawn across the rapids, two of the Arawaaks got courage and took it up in order to lay it in a more convenient place; they had just effected this, when at one bound it jumped out into the river and disappeared. The Indians looked quite stupefied, and never afterward could be persuaded to touch a cayman."

The creek of Macanillal is also famous for its many water-dogs, or *perros de agua* (Myopotamus coypos) and nutrias. The latter is a large species of otter with a fine glossy fur. The former resembles a beaver very closely, but has a round tail similar to that of the opossum. Both animals live in the water,

coming out occasionally to sun themselves on the sand banks. In a hut near the scene of our last crocodile adventure I saw a skin of the water-dog which measured five feet in length, exclusive of the tail; but although I often made diligent search for this singular amphibious animal, I never had an opportunity of making his acquaintance. Like the otter he is extremely shy, and only the practised eye of an Indian can trace him near the surface of the water when he rises to breathe.

I also sought in vain for the *manatī*, (Trichetus manatus,) another amphibious animal very common in Apure during the season of floods, when it leaves the beds of the great rivers to feed on the grass of the savannas. It is between ten and fifteen feet in length, and weighs from five to eight hundred pounds. Its shape resembles that of a seal, although considerably longer, with a smooth skin and rather small eyes. The flesh of the manati is very savory, on which account, as well as for the abundance of fat it yields, the Indians wage relentless war against it.

CHAPTER XII.

BIRDS OF ILL OMEN AND CARRION HAWKS.

THE distant bellowing of bulls assembling their herds—sure sign that the tiger was prowling near them—lulled us pleasantly to sleep in our hammock-beds after the fatigues and labors of the day. Not unfrequently we were treated to a serenading chorus of *araguatos* or howling monkeys, and to the hootings of the *titiriji* or tiger-owl of the pampas, whose peculiar cries might be readily mistaken, by an unaccustomed ear, for the angry growl of that spotted bandit of the forest—the jaguar. The neighboring woods were also the haunts of several other species of owls and goat-suckers, whose dreary notes wake mournful echoes by night and fill superstitious imaginations with fearful and foreboding visions.

The tiger-owl, which may be said to rank among the feathered tribe as does the jaguar or American tiger among beasts, is nearly the size of a domestic turkey. Like his powerful prototype, he is spotted with black, and seldom makes himself heard except-

ing at night, when calling on his mate; or during his nocturnal expeditions in the neighborhood of the farmyard. He is then, not only a terror to the defenceless brood, but also to the younger inmates of the house, who look upon him with a kind of superstitious awe, on which account he sometimes escapes punishment.

Less imposing in size than the preceding—although more terrifying in their way—are the *ya-acabó* and the *pavita*—two other species of owl considered harbingers of calamity or death, when heard fluttering around a house. The first portends an approaching death among the inmates, and is therefore looked upon with dread even by men who would not flinch at the sight of the most formidable bull or jaguar. Yet that appalling cry, *ya acabó! ya acabó!*—it is finished! it is finished!—seems so fraught with evil mystery, that few hear it unmoved. The only expedient resorted to, in such cases, is to form a cross with hot ashes in front of the house, which, it is believed, will drive away this ill-omened messenger. The *pavita*—although not larger than a turtle-dove, is also considered *pajaro de mal agüero*—a bird of ill-omen—being no less—they say—than the departed spirit of some good-natured relative come to warn his kindred against approaching calamity. In these cases, as it is believed that nothing is so acceptable to the poor soul as a few Pater Nosters and Ave Marias, they usually try to disembarrass themselves of the unwelcome visitor by reciting aloud several of these prayers, after crossing themselves twice with much devotion. Whenever this owl's dreaded cry is heard, it is certain to

be followed by a scene of great confusion and dismay: the children run to the women and hide behind their skirts; the women seek protection from the men; while these content themselves with muttering the holy invocation *Ave Maria Purisima!* which is ever with them the favorite talisman against danger.

Great varieties of goat-suckers—not unlike huge butterflies fluttering in the light evening breeze—also make their appearance at sundown, when may be heard their singularly harsh notes closely resembling human articulations.

"The harmless, unoffending goat-sucker, from the time of Aristotle down to the present day"—says Waterton in his "Wanderings"—"has been in disgrace with man. Father has handed down to son, and author to author, that this nocturnal thief subsists by milking the flocks. Poor injured little bird of night! how sadly hast thou suffered, and how foul a stain has inattention to facts put upon thy character! Thou hast never robbed man of any part of his property, nor deprived the kid of a drop of milk."

"When the moon shines bright, you may have a fair opportunity of examining the goat-sucker. You will see it close by the cows, goats, and sheep, jumping up every now and then, under their bellies. Approach a little nearer—he is not shy, 'he fears no danger for he knows no sin.' See how the nocturnal flies are tormenting the herd, and with what dexterity he springs up and catches them as fast as they alight on the belly, legs and udder of the animals. Observe how quiet they stand, and how sensible they seem of his good offices, for they neither strike at him,

nor hit him with their tails, nor tread on him, nor try to drive him away as an uncivil intruder. Were you to dissect him and inspect his stomach, you would find no milk there. It is full of the flies which have been annoying the herd.

"The prettily mottled plumage of the goat-sucker, like that of the owl, wants the lustre which is observed in the feathers of the birds of day. This, at once, marks him as a lover of the pale moon's nightly beams. There are nine species here" (in Demerara). "The largest appears nearly the size of the English wood-owl. Its cry is so remarkable, that having once heard it, you will never forget it. When night reigns over these immeasurable wilds, whilst lying in your hammock, you will hear this goat-sucker lamenting like one in deep distress. A stranger would never conceive it to be the cry of a bird. He would say it was the departing voice of a midnight murdered victim, or the last wailing of Niobe for her poor children, before she was turned into stone. Suppose yourself in hopeless sorrow, begin with a high loud note, and pronounce, 'ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha,' each note lower and lower, till the last is scarcely heard, pausing a moment or two betwixt every note, and you will have some idea of the moaning of the largest goat-sucker in Demerara.

"Four other species of the goat-sucker articulate some words so distinctly, that they have received their names from the sentences they utter, and absolutely bewilder the stranger on his arrival at these parts. The most common one sits down close by your door, and flies and alights three or four yards before you, as

you walk along the road, crying, 'Who are you, who, who, who are you?' Another bids you, 'Work away, work, work, work away.' A third cries mournfully, 'Willy, come go, Willy, Willy, Willy come go.' And high up the country a fourth tells you 'Whip poor Will, whip, whip, whip poor Will.'" *

There is a bird, however, among these nocturnal serenaders which impresses you with very different feelings from those produced by the owl species: this is the *Gallineta de monte* or forest-hen, a most beautiful creature both in color and in shape, and not unlike a water-hen in general appearance: the eyes especially are peculiarly pretty, being of a brilliant ruby color and scintillate like fire. These birds sing in concert, and their song—a lively chatter—has a mystic fascination I am unable to describe. They are also considered delicate eating; but unfortunately are very difficult to catch, for even after being shot, unless wounded in the leg, they can outstrip the swiftest hound, although their wings, being very small, avail them little. Nature, however, has provided them with long yellow legs for the purpose.

The ponds and lagoons of the savannas are literally crowded with other individuals of the feathered tribe, whose lively notes and incessant chatterings contribute likewise to enliven the night. The most conspicuous among them are various species of teal-ducks, such as *güires* and *yaguasos*, and a long-legged plover—*alcaravan*.—This last has the peculiarity of uttering a long, shrill sound at hourly intervals, thus marking every

* Wanderings in South America.

hour of the night after the manner of a clock's alarum. It is easily domesticated in the houses, where it renders some service, not only by marking time, but also by giving warning of the approach of strangers.

The *aruco* is another bird of large size, whose drum-like notes are often heard in the stillness of night. In size and plumage it greatly resembles a turkey; but its flesh is so spongy, that in lifting one of these uncouth birds from the ground, it appears like a mere bundle of feathers. The wings of the male are provided with a pair of sharp spurs, with which, when fighting, they greatly injure one another.

Another feature of the cattle-farm is the great number of carrion vultures and other birds of prey constantly hovering around the houses and corrals, attracted thither by the carcasses of dead animals. The most conspicuous among them is the *zamuro* or *gallinazo*, (Cathartes Atratus,) that constant companion of rude civilization in all tropical countries, but an indolent, greedy and disgusting associate. As, however, they occasionally render service in the capacity of scavengers, they are generally tolerated among the fowl of the farm-yard. It is a gregarious bird, and collects in large flocks on the roof and fences, where, with knowing glances, they seem to be scanning all the actions of the inmates. I often amused myself in threatening them with a missile of some sort; but they never appeared to notice it, until they perceived me to be in earnest: then with wings half spread and leaning forward, they watched intently the moment when I should hurl it at them to evade it by flight or a dodge of the head.—They build their nests in holes which they dig

in the ground. Their young are white, gradually changing to black as they grow older, and only two are raised by the parent every year. Although essentially carrion feeders, the olfactories of these birds are not so sensitive as to discover for them a dead animal —as many suppose;—but their sight is very good. They fly to immense heights, and thence examine every portion of the ground below them. In doing this they may often be observed on motionless wing, whirling round and round in graceful evolutions.

With the *zamuro* is often associated another carrion vulture, the *oripopo* or turkey-buzzard, (Vultur aura,) of the same size and with similar habits to the former. It differs however, from its relative in color—which is dark brown—and in having its neck more destitute of feathers. It is also more elegant in form and in its graceful evolutions through the air than the black vulture. The turkey-buzzard has a wide geographical range, having been met by Audubon as far north as Pennsylvania, and by Darwin in the arid plains of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. When soaring through the upper regions of the air, it can be at once recognized by its long, sweeping flight, accompanied by a buzzing sound, much like the gust of the whirlwind, and perfectly audible from a great distance.

The *Rey-Zamuro*, or king of the vultures, (Vultur papa,) larger than the foregoing, is the most beautiful of its kind. Its plumage, resembling down in softness and fineness, is of a pearly white, excepting the wings, which are tipped with black. The breast and neck, although entirely bare of feathers, are decked in the most brilliant tint of blue, orange, and red, while a sort

of membranous excrescence crowns the head, giving it a truly royal appearance.

This King of the vultures has also very aristocratic habits, never associating with any, not even those of his own tribe. It is a remarkable fact that when he alights upon a carcass, amidst a flock of other vultures, all these last retire, or make a circle round the banquet. When his majesty has dined, he flies off, uttering a loud cry, and only then his subjects venture to approach the carrion.

There is in the more elevated part of the adjoining province of Barinas, another bird of the same class—Vultur barbatus—which partakes of the eagle and the vulture, but is larger than either. It is called in consequence *gavilucho*—eagle-hawk—and has been seen at times descending toward the plains. The legs and wings are very long and powerful. It is said to be very handsome, but it is extremely shy of man. The plumage is bluish, red, white and yellow. This bird joins to the boldness and cruelty of the eagle, the loathsome voracity of the vultures. It prefers live flesh, especially that of small quadrupeds, and preys principally upon rabbits, goats, sheep and even young calves. It raises only one brood in a season, and builds its nest amidst the most inaccessible ledges of the Cordilleras.

I will close the list of the carrion birds of Venezuela with enumerating two others, nearly allied to the hawk, but partaking also of the characteristics of the eagle. These are the *caricari* and *chiriguare* (Polyborus Brasiliensis and P. Chimango) corresponding to the *caracaras* and *carrancha* of Brazil and

Buenos Ayres, concerning which Darwin has given this graphic account:

"The *caracaras* are from their structure placed among the eagles: we shall soon see how ill they become so high a rank. In their habits they will supply the place of our carrion crows, magpies and ravens, a tribe of birds widely distributed over the rest of the world, but entirely absent in South America.

"The carranchas, together with the chimango, constantly attend in numbers the estancias and slaughtering-houses. If an animal dies on the plain, the gallinazo commences the feast, and then the two species of Polyborus pick the bones clean. These birds, although thus commonly feeding together, are far from being friendly. When the carrancha is quietly seated on the branch of a tree or on the ground, the chimango often continues for a long time flying backward and forward, up and down, in a semicircle, trying each time at the bottom of the curve to strike its larger relative. Although the carranchas frequently assemble in numbers, they are not gregarious; for in desert places they may be seen solitary, or more commonly in pairs.

"The carranchas are said to be very crafty, and to steal great numbers of eggs. They attempt, also, together with the chimango, to pick off the scabs from the sore backs of horses and mules. The poor animal, on the one hand, with its ears down and its back arched, and, on the other hand, the hovering bird, eyeing at the distance of a yard the disgusting morsel, form a picture, which has been described by Captain Head with his own peculiar spirit and ac-

curacy. These false eagles rarely kill any living bird or animal; and their vulture-like, necrophagous habits are very evident to any one who has fallen asleep on the desolate plains of Patagonia, for when he wakes he will see, on each surrounding hillock, one of these birds patiently watching him with an evil eye; it is a feature in the landscape of these countries, which will be recognized by every one who has wandered over them. If a party of men go out hunting with dogs and horses, they will be accompanied during the day by several of these attendants. After feeding, the uncovered craw protrudes; at such times, and indeed, generally, the carrancha is an inactive, tame, and cowardly bird. Its flight is heavy and slow, like that of an English rook. It seldom soars; but I have twice seen one at a great height gliding through the air with great ease. It runs, (in contradistinction to hopping,) but not quite so quickly as some of its congeners. At times the carrancha is noisy, but is not generally so; its cry is loud, very harsh and peculiar, and may be likened to the sound of the Spanish guttural *g*, followed by a rough double *r r*; when uttering this cry, it elevates its head higher and higher, till at last, with its beak wide open, the crown almost touches the lower part of the head. This fact, which has been doubted, is quite true."

These birds are, however, a great blessing to the inhabitants of the Llanos, who are indebted to them, not only for the destruction of vast numbers of snakes and other reptiles, but for the service they render conjointly with the vultures in consuming the offal near houses. They seek their food both in dry lands

and amidst the swampy borders of rivers; on the one they find serpents and lizards in abundance; in the other terrapins, frogs and small crocodiles. They are peculiar in always killing their prey before commencing to devour it. If the *caricari* meet with a serpent or young crocodile large enough to oppose a long resistance, he approaches it sideways, shielded by one of his wings spread out, and striking his prey near the head with his bill, retires to a short distance to watch the result. A second blow is usually fatal, upon which, seizing his victim in his claws, he tears it with his bill. The sluggish tortoises and terrapins are easy prey for the *caricari;* these he renders helpless by turning them upon their backs, then with his powerful bill tears out the entrails.

Singing birds are of great numbers and varieties in the Llanos; these are mostly of the oriole species, all of which seem to delight in the vicinity of man. They usually select some tree near the house, and from its slender topmost branches, weave their hanging nests beyond reach of mischievous boys and monkeys. One of these songsters, the *gonzal*, had his nest close by the ropes of my hammock, where every morning before sunrise he awakened me by his sweetly plaintive notes; and so fascinated was I by this charming neighbor, that I always remained long after the reveille, listening to his delicious music.

There is another closely allied species, far superior to this or any other bird of the kind with which I am acquainted. It is the troupial, whose powerful notes can only be likened to strains of the violin. It is easily domesticated in houses, and learns readily any

air from hearing it whistled. I have one of these birds at home (in New York) which sings the Cachuca, Yankee Doodle, and various other tunes, besides distinctly whistling the name of a person. Its predominant colors are rich orange and shining black, with white spots on the wings and bill in beautiful contrast. It is a dangerous pet, however, if at large in a house, attacking strangers furiously, and always aiming at the eyes.

The *arrendajo*, or mocking-oriole, is perhaps the most extraordinary of its kind, on account of its imitative proclivities, mimicking every sound with such exactness, that he goes by the name of mocking-bird among the colonists of Demerara; according to Waterton, "His own song is sweet, but very short. If a toucan be yelping in the neighborhood, he drops it, and imitates him. Then he will amuse his protector with the cries of the different species of woodpecker, and when the sheep bleat he will distinctly answer them. Then comes his own song again; and if a puppy dog or a guinea fowl interrupt him, he takes them off admirably, and by his different gestures during the time, you would conclude that he enjoys the sport."

The arrendajo is, besides, a beautiful bird, and considered by ornithologists a model of symmetry; his predominant color is a glossy black, with the exception of his belly, rump and half the tail, which are of a bright yellow. On each wing also he has a spot of the same color. His beak is tinged of a delicate shade of lemon, while his eyes are sky blue, the pupil being a deeper shade of the same.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RODEO.

We had long been impatiently awaiting the command for a general turnout and chase among the legions of wild cattle grazing in the far horizon; and when at length the day was appointed for a *rodeo* or grand hunt, the universal gratification was boundless.

It is customary in all large cattle farms to assemble from time to time the cattle of certain districts for the purpose of selecting those which require branding and marking, and also to allow the neighboring farmers to separate from the herds many stray animals belonging to them, which, from the open nature of the plains, it is impossible to keep within the boundaries of their own savannas. This operation cannot be accomplished without a great number of able and expert riders, who, on a given day, surround a large area of country and drive toward one centre all the cattle that may be found within the selected space. An extended circle or ring is thus formed, enclosing a great horde of wild animals; these are kept in check

by the well-concerted evolutions of the *vaqueros* until the appointed rendezvous is reached, where, after allowing the cattle to cool down, the different brands are selected; hence the name of *rodeo*, from *rodear*, to surround.

The object on this occasion was not only to separate all the calves that required branding, but also to collect a large drove of oxen, so as to furnish our extensive potreros of San Pablo de Paya with marketable beeves.

Our first foray against the horned tenants of the wilderness would thus assume an importance seldom witnessed in that retired corner of the republic; as also in addition to our own force, we counted upon the assistance of the vaqueros from the neighboring cattle farms of Caucagua, La Yagua, and others bordering these savannas. Due notice was accordingly sent to the respective owners of those estates to muster on a certain day all their forces upon the field.

The area selected for the hunt embraced at least fifteen miles *à la ronde*. The hunters, in squads of six or eight, proceeded on the afternoon of the day before the hunt to their stations at various points of the savanna, having instructions to start at early dawn for the appointed centre. We of the staff made a simultaneous move from the house, driving before us, without distinction, all the animals we encountered on the route. The cattle being so unexpectedly roused from their slumbers, naturally endeavored to fly from their pursuers. Soon, however, meeting those from opposite directions, they whirled in mad despair, vainly endeavoring to break through the ex-

tended line of horsemen, who were constantly galloping about the struggling mass with shouts and thrusts from their steel-pointed *garrochas*.

At the commencement it was a truly interesting sight to watch the many groups of cattle, deer, wild boars, dogs, foxes, and other wild quadrupeds coming in from all directions as if impelled by one common instinct; but no sooner did that living ring commence closing upon them, than, scared by the confusion and uproar of the scene, their terror quickly grew to frenzy, and they ran from side to side bellowing, grunting, howling as they went. Solely intent upon the danger that menaced them, the mother forgot her offspring, and listened no more to their painful lamentations; the lover abandoned his beloved, seeking only his own safety in disgraceful flight; and even the fierce bull, forgetting for a moment that he is sovereign of those realms, lost his natural spirit of brave defiance, and rushed blindly off in the train of the frightened multitude. As if to increase the grandeur of the spectacle, a *garzero*, which had established itself on the borders of a creek hard by, also caught the alarm, and at our approach flew up in the air with a tremendous crashing of wing and bill, leaving their young to care for themselves, and with their discordant and piercing cries to swell the uproar of the scene. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of this vast multitude of frightened cranes and herons of all sorts which fluttered overhead at that moment; so great was their number that they spread over an extent of several miles, and actually for a time cast a deep shadow over the landscape.

Not less than eight or ten thousand head of cattle were brought within the ring formed of more than a hundred horsemen, who, in preventing the escape of the animals, were compelled to expose themselves and their noble steeds to the vindictiveness of the bulls, which were constantly rushing upon the lines in their endeavors to regain the open prairie. Whenever this was attempted, a horseman galloped boldly upon the fugitive, and by interposing himself between the open field and the bull, forced the latter back to the herd. Wonderfully adroit were the herdsmen in their avoidance of the repeated strokes aimed at them by the bulls, even when it appeared impossible to escape being caught between the animal's horns. The *garrocha* played an important part in repelling these attacks. This instrument, only second in importance to the lazo when in the hands of expert riders, is made of the slender, yet tough stem, of the *alvarico* palm, (ænocarpus cubarro,) by merely sharpening the top end to a point, or surmounting it with an iron head, around which a number of loose rings of the same metal are affixed; these, when shaken close to the animal's ear, frighten him off with the rattling sound they produce. The shaft of the goad is fully ten feet long, and although not thicker than a walking-stick, can bear an immense amount of pressure without breaking. As a weapon of aggression, this slender palm stem has become justly celebrated throughout the country, from the fact of having supplied the primitive bands of patriots who first dared to oppose the tyrannical rule of Spain with ready-made lances in the wilderness. The manner in which

Llaneros make use of the garrocha is quite extraordinary. When in pursuit of a bull which they purpose turning back to the *rodeo*, if the animal be swifter than the horse, the rider always manages to reach him with the point of his spear. This he thrusts into the bull's hide, just above the shoulder-blade, and then leans forward and rests the whole weight of his body upon the shaft, assisted in it by his intelligent charger. The equilibrium of the bull is thus usually destroyed, and he rolls headlong upon the ground. These falls are often sufficient to prevent further attempts at escape, in which case the bull is easily led into the *rodeo*. This performance, however, is one of the most dangerous practised among Llaneros, and is undertaken only by the most skilful and experienced riders, as, should the spear glance off while the hunter is leaning upon it, or should he happen to overturn the bull in front of his horse, he will in either case receive a terrific fall, and in the latter event, probably come into collision with the fallen animal.

From the midst, and above all the heads of that tumultuous assemblage of wild animals, rose the shaggy frontlet of a black bull, whose martial air and fearless step seemed to proclaim him the patriarch of the herd. An experienced Llanero, intently watching all his movements from afar, observed to those near him, that they would soon have fresh sport; and that "if any one prized the skin of his horse, he would do well to look to his spurs;" meaning that the black bull evidently intended mischief. Mr. Thomas, who was busily sketching the novel scene before him, un-

accustomed to the jargon of the Llanos, did not understand this remark, and therefore quietly continued his occupation. The next moment the bull was in our midst, charging first upon Captain Valor, one of the best riders on the field, who, in spite of his name, hastily spurred his steed out of reach; but the bull still pursuing, charged again and again upon him, and doubtless the last attempt would have been fatal to either horse or cavalier, had not the bull been checked in his final onset by accidentally plunging one of his legs into the hole of an armadillo, which fortunate circumstance gave the captain time to distance his pursuer. The bull next sought to vent his rage on the incautious artist, who, one leg crossed over the neck of his horse as support for his sketch-book, sat evidently absorbed in contemplation of the powerful and daring brute, with whose ferocious nature he was totally unacquainted. Having never before attended sports of the kind, my friend paid little regard to the menacing attitude of the animal, who rushed upon him with a fearful bellow that made us tremble for his fate. But for some unaccountable reason, the bull after one or two ineffectual attempts to strike his intended victim, wheeled about and disappeared among the tangled jungle bordering the creek, apparently indignant at the nonchalance with which John Bull received the advances of his namesake. Fearing the recurrence of similar attacks, which might have a less fortunate termination, it was decided to disembarrass ourselves of so uncomfortable a neighbor; with this object, the requisite number of horsemen provided with lazos were sent to capture

and subdue him. Instead of seeking safety in precipitate flight, as is generally the case with wild bulls, this one unflinchingly stood his ground, and neither shouts nor menaces could induce him to abandon the threatening attitude he had assumed. It was indeed a splendid sight to behold that proud monarch of the horned tribe bidding defiance to all about him, his huge and shaggy head, surmounted by a pair of pointed, powerful horns, high in air, and with an expression of countenance that was almost diabolical. His savage upper lip looked as if curled in contempt of his antagonists, and his eyes gleamed with fury in the light of the morning sun. Occasionally with his fore feet he ploughed up the earth, which, falling in showers upon him, he swept from his sides with his tail, uttering all the while a sort of suppressed roar resembling distant thunder. Then came the furious charge, when every one was compelled to run for his life, as nothing could arrest his headlong course. Blinded with rage, he spared not even those of his own species, killing two heifers instantly, and wounding a bull so severely that he died shortly afterward. Each time the men whirled the lazo to throw it over his head, he dashed forward with such rapidity as to disconcert their aim, until, finally, a bold and agile sambo, Sarmiento by name, who acted as caporal, and of whom we shall say more hereafter, dismounting from his horse and seizing the red blanket from his saddle, prepared to face the bull without the encumbrance of the lazo. His intention was to bewilder or *torear* him by a succession of such feats of agility as are usually practised by matadors in bull

fights; and so successful was he, that in one of the animal's furious charges, he succeeded in grasping and holding his tail; and in spite of the efforts the bull made to strike him with his horns, Sarmiento followed his movements so closely, that by a dexterous twist of the tail he succeeded in overthrowing the brute upon his side; he then drew the tail between the hind legs, and as this completely deprives the animal of all power of rising, he was enabled to hold him until others came to his assistance. Then, to prevent further mischief, the men proceeded to saw off the tops of his horns and to perform upon him other usual operations. These precautions, however, proved quite unnecessary, as the bull, exhausted by rage and loss of blood, shortly afterward dropped upon the ground and expired.

In spite of the vigilance and constant efforts of the men to keep the animals within the *rodeo*, several other bulls managed to break through the ranks. The only method of bringing them back was by using the all-potent lazo, and two men, one of them thus equipped, were despatched after the fugitive, which on being noosed, was by the second man speedily thrown upon his side by means of that dangerous appendage, the tail, in the management of which the Llaneros of Venezuela are so famous. This accomplished, they pierced the thick cartilage which divides the nostrils with the point of a dagger; one end of the thong was then passed through the wound, while the other remained fastened to the horse's tail; the Llanero, then mounting his steed, jerked the end attached to the bull, which brought the prostrate beast

at once to his feet, when he was marched off to his destination without further trouble, literally led by the nose.

Another method of arresting a bull in his flight, is by a bold manœuvre termed *colear*, and which consists, as already stated, in availing themselves of the animal's tail to overthrow him when at full speed; but that is not easy of accomplishment, as the bull has then such entire freedom of movement. The horse also must be perfectly well trained to these hazardous undertakings, and should obey instantly the slightest pull of the bit; for if the bull turns suddenly upon his pursuer, the chances are ten to one that the horse will be severely wounded. The rider first gallops close to the rear of the bull, and seizing his tail with one hand, gives it a turn or two around his wrist to prevent its slipping. When thus prepared, he urges his horse forward, until the heads of the two animals are on a "dead-heat;" then quickly turning in an oblique direction, and exerting all his strength, he pulls the bull toward him, and does not relinquish his hold until he perceives that the enemy is tottering, when he is easily overthrown from the great impetus imparted by their rapid pace. Some men are so dexterous that they can colear with both hands at the same time; which necessarily gives greater power over the bull, enabling the rider to bring him down much more readily. The horse, in this case, left to his own well-taught guidance, assists the manœuvres of his rider, pushing forward at the instant he perceives that his master is prepared for the pull, and turning about also at the right moment. How won-

derful the instinct of these noble creatures! that teaches them so readily the importance of the slightest movement, on which often depends, not only the success of the enterprise, but their own safety, as well as that of their masters. If too powerful resistance is offered at the outset by the bull, as is sometimes the case, the rider still clings to the tail of his adversary, and throwing himself off his horse while at full speed, the impetus combined with his weight and strength never fail in bringing the bull like a fallen giant to the ground; then the man quickly drawing the tail between the hind legs, awaits the arrival of his companions to assist in securing the prize.

It was often matter of surprise to me in what manner the Llaneros, notwithstanding the thorough training of the horses, contrived their speedy approach to the rear of the bulls, as these were usually considerably ahead at the start. On one occasion, I was regretting that my pony was too small to keep pace with the hunters, when one of the men, who was mounted on a prototype of Rosinante—on which, nevertheless, he had performed prodigies of strength—turned to me and said, "*Vaya, niño*, let me show you that this is not the fault of the horse, but that of the rider;" whereupon we exchanged horses, and off he went after a powerful bull just escaped. Not many minutes expired before I lost sight of horse and rider in a cloud of dust raised by the beast in its fall.

Some hours expired before the tremendous excitement and confusion of the wild melée described above had sufficiently subsided to render the forms of men

and cattle visible through the clouds of dust and ashes raised by the trampling of so many animals. The grass, at this period parched by the sun and reduced to ashes in various places by the usual conflagrations, mingled with the dust and rose in dense columns, which from afar might have been mistaken for the dreaded monsoon.

In the mean while the distracted mothers ran from side to side, lowing piteously for their missing young. Here and there fierce duellos among rival bulls took place for the possession of some shaggy one of the softer sex. Butting their huge fronts together, and goring each other with their sharp-pointed horns, they fought with the courage and skill of accomplished gladiators, tearing up the earth in wild fury, and filling the air with their deep, savage bellowings. A crowd of admirers from amidst the herd formed a circle around the combatants, and if any from among their number evinced the least disposition to interfere, he was immediately chased away by the others, so that there might be fair play while the fight lasted. Often these encounters proved fatal to one of the belligerents, as neither will yield the palm without a desperate resistance.

The bellowing of thousands of animals, with the yells and deafening shouts of the men galloping about the plain, waving their ponchos and rattling their *garrochas*, combined to give the scene more the appearance of a fiendish melodrama, than a purely pastoral assemblage of men and cattle.

The confusion having at length subsided, four of the ablest horsemen, penetrating the living mass,

which, as they advanced, surged on either side like the waves of the sea, commenced the difficult task of separating the animals intended for the brand, and those belonging to our neighbors. This occasioned another series of evolutions, which only men trained to such exercises could have accomplished successfully.

It is usual in all cattle-farms to cut a notch or two in the animal's ear at the time they are branded, for the purpose of recognizing them more readily from a distance, a precaution which is particularly serviceable on occasions like that just described, it being impossible to read the brand when the creatures are crowded into a herd. Although most of the calves had not the notch, they belong by right to the owner of the mother, even if they are found on the lands of another party. Of it the vaqueros availed themselves in their subsequent apportioning of the different lots of cattle. This they accomplished in the most expeditious manner by riding boldly at the animals in question, hastening or checking their progress through the herd as the case required. Thus by repeated evolutions of the sort, they finally brought the animals to the edge of the ring, where an opening was purposely left for their escape, and then the nearest horseman drove them in among a small body of tame cattle stationed a short distance from the *rodeo*. These violent manœuvrings could not be accomplished, however, without endangering at every step the security of the entire herd. Each time the drivers turned out an animal the whole mass was thrown into the utmost confusion, and it required the most consummate skill

on the part of the men to prevent the entire dispersion of the cattle. The fearlessness with which the drivers plunged into that labyrinth of savage, panting brutes, advancing close upon the wall of bristling horns which barred their progress, and boldly driving the infuriated creatures before them like a pack of sheep, was truly worthy of admiration. The readiness with which they detected at a distance the mark on the animal's ears was also no less noticeable, singling out such at a glance, and immediately driving them away to their respective groups. When all the brands had thus been apportioned, each owner proceeded to drive away his own herd. We found in these cases—as indeed in all similar ones—the assistance of *madrineros* or trained oxen, of great service in driving a large body of cattle across the plains. A dozen of these oxen were sufficient to lead a vast drove, stopping or advancing at a signal from the overseer, while the vaqueros kept close watch on rear and flank to prevent escape and to urge on the cattle, especially the crowd of stray calves—some of them only a few hours old—which, like a procession of lost children, kept up a continual bewailing for their mothers as if the last ray of hope had departed from them. Although their case was indeed a hard one, and the task of driving them over the rough ground still harder, we were unwilling to leave them behind, hoping to find their mammas among the multitude before us. When within a short distance from the house, we halted to make preparations for the enclosure of the herds. But one of the most dangerous parts of the proceedings yet remained, that of forcing the cattle into the corrals.

The entrance to the *majada*—shaped like a great funnel—was, like the rest of the fences, made of very strong posts, driven into the ground and barred across at intervals with thick rafters of bamboo. Through this funnel, or *manga*, the cattle in small lots were driven at full speed headed by the *madrineros*—those treacherous guides trained to ensnare their kindred—while the horsemen barricaded the mouth of the funnel with the breasts of the poor horses. Every thing proceeded satisfactorily as far as the end of the funnel, the *madrineros*, with all the cunning of semi-civilized brutes, redoubling their pace at the moment of entering the great enclosure. Then their wild brethren, perceiving the treachery, turned upon their captors, and a most fearful struggle ensued. The bulls, in spite of the deafening shouts of the men, and the formidable array of *garrochas* levelled at their heads, endeavored to force their way back to the open plain, and many of them actually succeeded in breaking through the barricade of horses. Thus many noble steeds, which until then had escaped unhurt, met with an inglorious death. That most of the men escaped unhurt, appeared little less than miraculous, as not only were they also exposed at every moment to the vindictive attacks of the bulls, but it often happened that some of them were unhorsed, when they were in imminent danger of being trampled by the retreating foe. The superior skill and intrepidity of man, however, triumphed at length over mere brute resistance, and the whole herd was in a short time securely quartered in the *majada*.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRANDING SCENES.

"Entre tanto en ancha hoguera
Como encendido tizon,
Ya la marca centellea
Con chispas de azul punzó."
VENTURA DE LA VEGA.

It was late in the evening when we partook of our only meal that day, and we afterward retired to rest, but not to sleep, owing to the incessant noise made by the cattle in the corrals, who, during the whole night, were rushing to and fro as if goaded by demons. Sometimes we feared that the fences would give way before their mad onset, while the dust rose in suffocating clouds, filling the atmosphere and mingling with our food, which was thus rendered almost unfit for use. The bellowing, roaring, and moaning of the herd could only be likened to the wild confusion of a battle-field. Many of the savage bulls in their fury turned their horns, sharp as bayonets, against their own kindred. The proud padrote, his dusky mate, and the tender heifer shared alike in the slaughter. The next day numbers lay gored to death in the dust

of the corrals, while others presented ghastly wounds. Soon the carcasses began to putrefy, which, added to the particles of dust floating through the air we breathed, rendered the atmosphere intolerable. Many more of the cattle died of suffocation, and others from an infectious disease induced by the crowded state of the herd and the noxious exhalations from the carcasses. We therefore lost no time in branding them that they might be set free, lest the infection should extend to the whole herd.

Animals affected in this manner exhibit no symptoms of the disease until immediately prior to their demise, when they are observed to stagger a few paces and drop suddenly, as if shot by a rifle ball; and yet the vultures seem to possess an intuitive knowledge of this approaching dissolution, in proof whereof, numbers of these feathery satellites of death can be seen hovering around an animal which the scourge has doomed, although it is apparently still in perfect health. The infection, fortunately, is confined to the horned cattle, no instance of its transmission to other creatures occurring, except in the case of men venturing to skin the carcasses, when it assumes a different form. Persons who have thus exposed themselves are seized with a horrible swelling of the neck, commencing with a pimple not larger than a pin's head, and gradually increasing in size until it extends to the cerebellum. Death is the inevitable result if the patient is not promptly attended by a skilful physician. There were two or three cases of the kind among our own people, but by careful treatment we were fortunate enough to save them. There are, how-

ever, every year many poor fellows in that improvident region, who, not having the same advantages, are often carried away by the distemper.

The branding of cattle, as conducted in extensive establishments, is a real festival for the sport-loving people of the Llanos; and each one feels himself as deeply interested therein as though assisting at a grand bull fight—the time-honored amusement of the descendants of Pelayo, the Cid, and other worthies of like celebrity; and indeed the former, or *hierra*, as that wild pageant is termed, with all its incidents and dangers, all its noise and bustle, is perhaps the grandest spectacle of the kind that could be devised for the entertainment and training of that chivalric race. It is undoubtedly one of the wildest scenes ever beheld in the pampas, and one which afforded me exceeding pleasure from the variety of incident accompanying it. The majada is, in fact, the school in which from infancy the Llanero is trained to conquer or to die in daily struggles with the brute creation. It is a veritable Olympic Circus, where the agility and strength for which he is famed are displayed during the exciting operations performed upon the savage denizens of the savannas, branding and marking the calves, sawing off the horns of furious bulls and converting them into oxen for the improvement of their flesh and disposition.

On the day appointed, all animals confined in the *majada* are driven into the *corralejas* or smaller corrals adjoining the great enclosure, and there packed as closely as possible to prevent the bulls, always ready to strike, from doing much mischief among

their own kindred. Meantime the men prepare their lazos and station themselves according to their respective strength and ability, while the boys kindle a blazing fire in a safe corner of the *majada*, in which the various brands to be used are kept at a red heat. These brands generally represent the initials of the owner, or some sort of hieroglyphic stamp affixed to the end of a long handle. A record of these is kept by the Justice of the Peace in each district; and it is considered a great crime to alter or in any unauthorized manner efface their impression from the skin of animals. The cattle are usually branded on the haunches; but whenever a horse, mule, or mare is sold, the brand in a reversed position is again affixed, this time on its shoulder, followed by the buyer's brand, the same operation being repeated whenever the animal changes hands, so that some poor beasts come at last to be quite disfigured with deep scars.

When all is ready for the fray, the majordomo, climbing to the highest post of the enclosure, from whence he directs operations, gives the signal. Here he keeps an account of the calves branded, by notching a long strip of raw hide. A number of these strips, called *tarja* or tally, are carefully preserved in every cattle farm as a record to be laid before the owner at the year's end in lieu of balance-sheet.

The principal business of the day being that of branding the calves collected at the *rodeo*, two or three men armed with lazos, fearlessly enter the pens at peril of life and limb—for the mothers are ever ready to defend their young—and proceed to drag the calves out singly by means of the lazo,

though not without many obstinate struggles on their part, and the more formidable resistance of their parents, which are kept back at the point of the *garrocha* by men stationed on the fences. The contest, however, is not of very long duration; the calf nearly choked by the lazo, and tormented by a cruel twisting of his tail, springs forward toward the branding place. The moment he passes the threshold, one or two little imps pounce upon the tail, jerking it until they succeed in throwing him down; the lazo is then quickly removed, and the captor hurries back to the pen for another calf. When a number have been thus secured, a man goes round with the brand, and in a very short time the whole lot are stamped with the burning seal of the estate amidst the piteous bellowings and ineffectual kicks of the helpless creatures.

These operations, although performed on young animals, are not so easily accomplished as might be supposed; it being not unusual for full-grown ones to spring over the fences, or force their way through the narrow gate of their pen. At such times, the operators outside are in imminent danger of being assailed by the fugitives, if the latter are not promptly secured by men stationed for the purpose at the gate of the *corralejas*. It becomes a much more serious business when a powerful bull is lazoed. He not only refuses obstinately to be dragged out like a calf, but requires the combined force and skill of all the men to compel him from the pen, although the gate is purposely left wide open. In such cases a picador, climbing to the top of the fence, endeavors to drive

out the animal by repeated thrusts of the goad; that also failing, another lets himself down close to the bull's tail, which he twists violently, and this seldom fails to drive the refractory creature madly out, followed by the shouts and huzzas of his cruel tormentors. The next proceeding is to throw him for the purpose of regaining the lazo, and for the performance of the above-mentioned operations. This, however, is no easy matter, from the frantic plunges of the bull, who has the entire range of the lazo. The only certain method is that of dragging him close upon a post—*botalon*—driven into the ground, where his overthrow is finally accomplished by the united efforts of several men, one grappling his hind legs, another seizing the tail, while two others keep a steady hold of the thong, until the animal, at last exhausted, drops heavily to the ground.

To justly appreciate scenes like these, one must himself behold the dusky athlete battling single-handed with a bull just escaping from the corral. Seizing him by a horn with one hand, the Llanero still holding it watches his opportunity until he can grasp with the other the animal's tail. The bull is then allowed to run as fast as he will, as the greater his speed the more easily his downfall is accomplished. If the bull moves too slowly, a few impressive jerks generally accelerate his speed; but occasionally he returns the compliment by turning fiercely upon his tail-bearer, who, if not very nimble, risks being gored to death; yet his skilful antagonist, not only usually succeeds in evading his attack, but speedily contrives to throw him. No sooner does this occur, than the

vanquished one is surrounded by a host of merry yelling vagabonds, one brandishing a huge knife, which he sharpens on the horns previous to performing the operation which transforms the animal into an ox, and if not previously marked, cuts his ear according to the rule of the estate whose property he is; another holds a red-hot brand, which he implants at once upon the quivering hide; while a third with a small hand-saw cuts off the sharp points of the horns. The whole operation scarcely occupies three minutes' time; but notwithstanding this, the danger is very great if the bull succeed in regaining his feet before it is finished, as, instead of being subdued, no sooner is he free, than he turns upon his assailants in renewed fury, and then those valiant heroes may be seen scattering about the arena like a flock of partridges. With nostrils widely distended, and foaming at the mouth, the bull for an instant stands an embodiment of rage and terror, endeavoring to discover the objects of his vengeance. None, however, are presumptuous enough to await his onset; they would be levelled with the dust in an instant, and his conquerors therefore adopt the wiser policy of a speedy retreat to the highest fence, whence they pour a volley of abuse upon his shaggy head.

Occasionally, while the men were engaged with one bull, several others effected their escape in spite of the men whose business it was to prevent it. The situation of the others then became critical in the extreme, being exposed to the attacks of the fugitives on the one hand, and to those of the prisoner on the other; this last they were often compelled to abandon

in the midst of their labors. Those who held younger animals formed with their bodies a sort of barricade with which to fend off the aggressor, when no other expedient could be resorted to. At times it appeared almost impossible to escape the impetuous charge of the bulls, especially when the men were some distance from the fences; the only remaining means of safety then consisted in throwing themselves flat upon the ground at the moment the bull aimed a stroke, as in that case the animal invariably jumped over their bodies. It is asserted that bulls in charging always close their eyes, thus missing in blind precipitancy many excellent opportunities for avenging the outrages perpetrated on their race. Not so the cows, who are said to keep their eyes fully open when they are bent on mischief, seldom if ever turning from their intended victim without leaving some mark, of either horn or hoof, in token of displeasure.

On one occasion our leader himself very narrowly escaped from one of these infuriate feminalities in spite of his ability in dealing with wild cattle, and his dexterity in avoiding their attacks. We had just entered the *majada*, and were making preparations for the coming frolic. We stood under the shade of a splendid *matapalo* or wild fig-tree growing within the great enclosure, when a cow, which had left her young behind while chased in the savanna, feeling rather uneasy in consequence, cleared the fence of the pen wherein she was confined, and the next moment was among us. All retreated to the fences, excepting our leader, who, ever rather sensitive about turning his back upon an enemy, stood his ground somewhat

protected by the stout body of the tree. The cow at first appeared to pay but little attention to him, making straight for the gate of the *majada*, which she, unfortunately, found strongly barred against her escape. Then retracing her steps, she sought to avenge her evident disappointment upon the gentleman in white, whom she very well recollected having left at the foot of the old *matapalo*. Still the undaunted soldier, although repeatedly urged by his men to fly, scorned the idea of seeking the *talanquera*, or, in other words, climbing the fence in a hurry, thinking at first to avoid the enemy by stepping round and round the tree; but the cow was too cunning to be cheated in this manner. After thus chasing him in vain for a few minutes, she suddenly changed her course, seeking him in the opposite direction, which brought them face to face. Unfortunately, the General, who had that morning been sitting for his likeness in the full costume of the Llanos which he still wore, found himself rather embarrassed in his movements by the wide folds of the *manta*. This prevented him from drawing the sword he had retained, which was his first impulse; and he therefore retreated a few paces into a more open space where he could *torear* her until others came to his assistance. With the subtlety of her sex the cow at once perceived his intentions, and rapidly following his every movement, watched her opportunity to strike him on the side; but he, precisely at the right instant, with great presence of mind threw himself flat upon the ground just as she aimed the blow. Instead, however, of jumping over him, as is usual with bulls in similar cases, the

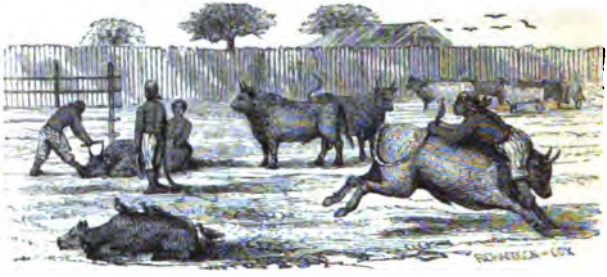
cow rushed upon him, when his adroitness in grasping one of her fore feet so firmly as to arrest further attack until others came to his relief, prevented any injury beyond a slight scratch on his side and tearing his *manta*.

It is needless to add that after so disrespectful an assault upon the revered person of our leader, the cow received no gentle treatment at the hands of the indignant *vaqueros:* some were for despatching her at once for their evening meal; others, for affixing a dry hide to the end of her tail and letting her loose over the plain; while a few, compassionating her ignorance, among them the aggrieved owner, were only for depriving her of the means of doing further mischief with the horns. This opinion prevailing at last over all others, the ruthless hand of the executioner at once applied the saw to the pride of her head, after which she was allowed to depart in peace. Thus ended a short, but not altogether inglorious struggle, which, but for the cunning and address displayed on both sides, might have terminated fatally to either of the parties engaged in it.

After the *corralejas* had been emptied of their contents, there still remained in the *majada* several bulls at large, which had escaped during the confusion; and many of these not yet having been operated upon, another most exciting chase was afforded to the indefatigable and athletic hunters. The narrowness of the field, however, which precluded the use of horses, and the fact that each bull required to be captured with the lazo, occasioned serious obsta-

cles and much risk to the men engaged therein. Lack of volunteers there was none, and among them a powerful red-haired zambo, which freak of nature had obtained for him the sobriquet of *colorado*—the red man.

This fellow enjoyed a wide reputation in the country for his exploits, both in field and corral, and on this occasion proved himself deserving of the fame which he had heretofore achieved. It was he who now first led the charge. Seizing a lazo of long dimensions, contrary to usual practice, he proceeded to coil it on his right hand, securing the end upon his left. Then, cautiously approaching a formidable black bull, which stood alone in the centre of the *majada*, he sent the whole lazo, noose and all, uncoiling like a snake through the air until it reached the animal's head. Although the distance must have been thirty paces, we had the satisfaction of seeing the noose settle round his neck as truly as if placed there by the practised hand of a hangman. From this moment, Colorado was unanimously proclaimed master of the lazo, an honor which he enjoyed to the end of the performances, as all that remained in this case to be accomplished by the others was merely to pull the lazo in order to bring the bull up to the botalon or upright post, which served the double purpose of subduing stake for the bulls, and training post for the boys. To it one or more young bulls were usually brought at the end of the day's work, and the boys compelled to mount them in the manner described in a previous chapter; the animals are then set loose amidst the crowd of assembled quadrupeds, which are evidently amazed at the singular spectacle.



We witnessed several exhibitions of the kind in the *majada*, whenever we were present at the branding of the cattle; but never do I recollect any serious accident occurring to the little riders. Thus it is that the Llaneros educate their boys from infancy to the severest exercises of their profession, so that they in turn may teach the same to their own children.

Not always, however, is the Llanero's triumph over the brute creation obtained so easily, for many are the instances in which the latter gain the advantage in these hand-to-horn combats, and in such cases the evil resulting is very great. Sometimes the men are dreadfully lacerated, either by the horns or the sharp hoofs of their antagonists, frequently losing their lives in consequence, from want of proper medical treatment at the time the wounds are inflicted. The most common phase the disease assumes is that of tetanus or lock-jaw, which sometimes ensues from only a slight scratch on the tendinous part of the foot. From the scarcity of surgeons in the country, and the lack of skill in dressing these wounds, mortification, aneurisms, malignant abscesses, and a variety of other

complaints are amongst the evils resulting from this otherwise entertaining sport. In spite of all our precautions, and the assistance of the surgeon, Dr. Gallegos, we lost three of our best men, and several others afterward died in consequence of injuries received during that expedition.

CHAPTER XV.

PLANTS AND SNAKES.

The wide extent of the savannas composing this cattle farm, and the dispersion of the herds throughout them, compelled us to remove our quarters to a more central point, from whence we could sally forth in their pursuit. Orders were issued accordingly for the men to be in readiness, and the next morning we quitted with regret our comfortable quarters at the majordomo's mansion and started for Mata-Gorda, one of those delightful primeval groves which dot the prairies here and there.

Some idea of the extent of this huge farm may be gathered from the fact that one may start at a gallop early in the morning from one end of the savannas and not reach the other until late at night of the same day. Its area would measure at least eighty square leagues, or about one hundred and fifty thousand acres of the richest land, but which under the present backward and revolutionary state of the country is comparatively valueless to its owner. The number of

cattle dispersed throughout the length and breadth of this wide extent of prairie land was computed to be about a hundred thousand heads, and, at one time, ten thousand horses; but what with the *peste*, revolutionary exactions, and skin hunters, comparatively very few of the former and none of the latter have been left.

Our first occupation on arriving at the Mata was to set up a hasty ranch for the protection of our accoutrements and baggage, a structure which required little labor or expense, the graceful palms affording the best kind of thatch for the roof, and the surrounding woods sufficient posts and rafters for the framework. A convenient apartment was provided in it for the hammocks of our Leader and worthy Surgeon, while the rest of us were compelled to seek accommodations among the trunks and branches of the trees.

These arrangements completed, the necessary timber was next cut for the corrals to be erected for enclosing the coming herds, a work to which the hunters devoted themselves, while I found greater attractions in my daily explorations through the tangled forest. The beautiful palms there claimed my most particular attention. Apart from the splendor of their growth and other peculiarities to which I have already alluded in a former chapter, they are sufficient in themselves to supply many of the domestic and economic wants of man in a primitive state.

I also observed here many useful species of the extensive family of leguminous plants, such as the *cañafistula*, (Cathartocarpus,) of which there were several varieties, all of them beautiful timber trees,

whose pods, two feet long, were filled with a black gummy substance possessing very medicinal properties. In a natural form it affords one of the mildest and most agreeable cathartics. Belonging to the same family, the *caro*, *masaguaro*, and *saman* acacias can scarcely be rivalled in durability by any other production of the vegetable world. Their pods also contain a large proportion of a similar gummy substance which cattle devour greedily, and which fattens them better than any other kind of fodder.

The *malagueta* pepper, or donkey-bean, (*Uvaria febrifuga*,) an excellent febrifuge and antispasmodic, also grows here in the greatest abundance. Its aromatic seeds are carefully preserved in the tobacco bladder of every Llanero, along with the tubers of the snake root, (*Aristolochia bulbosa*,) a plant possessing the same virtues, and withal the best antidote against the bite of serpents.

Several other medicinal plants, such as the stately *mora*, the wild sour-sop, and the *mapurite*, are also met with here; the last owes its name to the peculiar odor, not unlike that of the skunk, which pervades the whole plant, rendering it any thing but acceptable in the neighborhood of an encampment.

Of wild fruits there was also a fine array, and among them the most delicious of all, in my opinion, is the *manirito*, (Anona muricata,) a fruit scarcely known to horticulture, and still less to the listless inhabitant of the country where it grows in wild luxuriance; as no one there has yet thought of bringing it under cultivation. This plant, which belongs to the same family as do several of the most celebrated

fruit trees of the tropics—the various kinds of custard apples and the delicious cherimoyer—attains a height of ten feet, and at the season of maturity, actually bends to the ground beneath its sweet load. Unfortunately it all ripens at once, so that in a few days the whole crop disappears. This fruit, like its congener the sour-sop, is covered with soft prickles. The inside, a sweet and highly aromatic pulp, is filled with small seeds, which, when the fruit is eaten in large quantities, as is generally the case, are apt to produce dangerous strictures. The whole plant is exceedingly fragrant; and by rubbing the leaves between the hands, they emit a delightful aroma, not unlike that of new mown hay.

Another pleasant fruit, that I here met also for the first time, was the wild *madroña*, of the size of a lemon, which it also resembles in shape and color. It is filled with a most agreeable sub-acid pulp; this envelops three or four large nuts, not unlike cacao-beans, and tastes very much like strawberries. The tree producing this delicious fruit attains a height of twenty feet. The foliage is very dense, with coriaceous leaves ten inches long, of a brilliant green. A thick yellow resin, resembling gamboge, exudes from every part of the tree when wounded; but whether it has been found useful for any particular purpose, I was unable to ascertain.

Somewhat similar to the latter, although growing upon a plant of an entirely different nature, is the *cacaita*, or monkey cacao-bean, a soft and rather insipid fruit, the production of a vine, which monkeys devour greedily.

By far the largest proportion of the trees were several species of *guamos* (Inga lucida) and others of the same order of leguminous plants, bearing pods eight or ten inches long; these are filled with a row of black beans, enveloped in a snowy white and sweetish pulp, most agreeable to the taste. The ripening season of this mild and wholesome fruit was just commencing, and every day we gathered and consumed quantities of it.

Another pod-bearing tree of great utility proper to that region is the *algarrobo*, (Hymenea curbari!,) the locust tree of the New World, which bears a thick ligneous pod containing several hard, brown, and rounded beans. These are surrounded by a sweet farinaceous substance, possessing great alimentary properties. A fragrant resin exudes from the pericarp of the pods, which, on being burned, yields a perfume similar to the odor of frankincense combined with that of balsam of Tolú.

I had almost forgotten to mention, among the agreeable fruits of these parts, several kinds of wild guavas, from the tiny Arrayan, scarcely distinguishable among the tufts of grass by which it is surrounded, to the beautiful *paujil* shrub, bearing in great profusion quantities of brilliant scarlet, highly perfumed and acidulous fruits. The berry of the former exactly resembles Jamaica allspice in shape; is quite sweet, and possesses in a high degree the exquisite flavor and aroma of the myrtle tribe, to which indeed all these plants belong.

Great care was necessary in selecting spits for roasting the beef, on account of a most poisonous

shrub, the deadly *guachamacá*, abounding there. It belongs to the extensive family of Apocineæ or Dogbanes, whose poisonous qualities are known all over the world. So virulent is this poison, that meat roasted on spits made from the guachamacá, absorbs sufficient poison to destroy all who partake of it. The lazy Indians make use of it to kill without trouble the cranes and herons on the borders of lagoons. For this they procure a number of sardines, besmear them with the juice of the plant, and spread them along the places frequented by those birds. The moment one of them seizes the fish, and before it is fairly swallowed, the bird drops dead; then the indolent hunter, issuing from his hiding-place, cuts off the parts affected by the poison, usually the head and neck, and feels no scruple in eating the remainder.

A dreadful case of poisoning by means of this plant had just occurred at Nutrias, soon after our arrival on the Apure, which created for a time great excitement even amidst that scattered population. A woman who lived with a man in the vicinity of that town became jealous of the attentions he bestowed upon a charming neighbor of theirs, and determined to avenge herself, but in some manner that would not excite suspicion. In those remote regions where coroners and chemists are unknown, it is impossible to detect murder except where marks of external violence are visible. Accordingly, she prepared for her lover a bowl of *masato*, a favorite beverage of the country, made of Indian corn boiled, mashed in water, and fermented; in this she soaked chips of the poisonous plant and offered it to him with smiling grace.

Delighted at sight of the tempting bowl, the unsuspecting lover invited several of his neighbors—among them the hated rival—to share it with him. The woman, not intending to destroy any but her perfidious lover, during his absence prepared another bowl, omitting this time the poison. Llanero politeness obliged the host, however, to mix his portion with the others, which having done, he invited the company to dip their calabash cups into the bowl. Out of eleven persons there assembled, among them several children, not one escaped except the wicked perpetrator of this wholesale murder; nor even the donkeys and fowl of the household, as their attentive master had thrown them the remains of the deadly mixture.

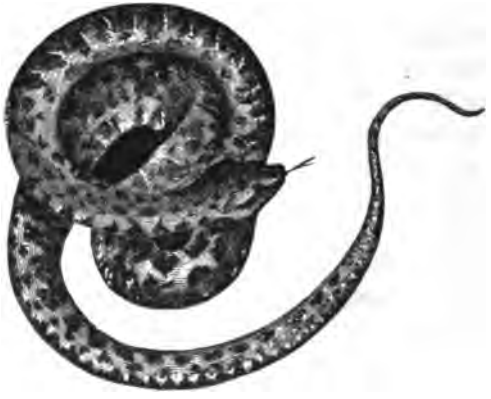
Such is the dread in which the Llaneros hold this plant, that I was not even permitted to preserve the specimens of fruit and flowers I had collected, with the object of ascertaining, on my return to the Valleys, the botanical characters of the species. They almost threatened to desert, if I insisted upon carrying them among the baggage.

The propagation of this plant throughout the Apure appears to be of recent origin, none of the oldest inhabitants recollecting to have met with it until within comparatively a short period.

The men had no small trouble in clearing our camp of many noxious reptiles; and it became our regular afternoon business to hunt for snakes. We succeeded in killing a great number in the vicinity of the ranch, some very poisonous, while others were

quite harmless; of the latter class I found two species of coral snakes, against which an unjust prejudice exists, that they are among the most poisonous. Of the former, the *matacaballo* is the most to be feared. Although scarcely larger than a good-sized earthworm, his bite is nevertheless almost instantaneously fatal to man and beast. Unlike his other sluggish and torpid congeners, this little snake is the more dangerous because always on the alert. The tramp of a horse, especially, never fails in rousing them, against which noble animal they evince an inveterate rancor. I was once occupied in sketching one of these snakes, which I had permitted to live for the purpose, and I observed that whenever a horse approached us, the snake rapidly turned his head in the direction of the sound, seeming as if anxious to strike the animal with his fangs; but as I had fortunately taken the precaution of disabling him by partially breaking his spine, he could make but little progress toward the object of his dislike.

The tendinous part between the hoof and ankle-joint of the horse being nearest the ground, is consequently most exposed to the bite of the *matacaballo;* and although the distance from the ankle to the heart is very great, it not unfrequently happens that the animal drops as if touched by the electric spark, from which fact I infer that this poison acts on the nervous system as well as on the blood. Horned cattle and pigs are fortunately shielded by the thickness of their skin from the fangs of this destroyer, which cannot penetrate it. Hence this snake has been termed, *par excellence*, matacaballo, literally horse-killer.



It was at one time extremely dangerous to drive horses across the banks of these savannas where snakes are always most abundant; their numbers, however, have been considerably diminished since the immense multiplication of pigs in those regions.

Horses have there also another dangerous enemy—a great hairy spider or species of the tarantula; this inflicts a very poisonous and painful sting just above the hoof, which in time drops off, although it is never followed by death.

But among all these evil creatures, there is none so disgusting or so dangerous as the rattlesnake. The virulence of its poison, and the great size attained by some, renders them the terror of every man and beast where they abound. Fortunately for mankind, they have been provided by an ever-watchful Providence with what is termed a rattle; this is composed of a number of horny rings placed at the end of the tail,

which, on being shaken, produce a peculiar sound, and serve as warning. It is said that Nature every year adds one of these rings, thus marking the age of the reptile. From its loathsome body is exhaled a strong odor, somewhat resembling musk, in itself sufficient to warn the most careless, as it is perceptible at the distance of a hundred feet. The head is peculiarly flat and broad, and the eyes sparkle in the darkness like specks of fire. The mouth is a ghastly aperture, whence issues a black and forked tongue, which the reptile moves incessantly when irritated. Two long fangs, curved inwardly, project in front of the upper jaw, and through them the fatal venom is discharged. The poison is secreted from two glands in the form of small bags at the root of the fangs, admirably adapted for the purpose, being hollow inside throughout their whole length, and by their pressure against the glands produced by the act of biting, the liquid is ejected into the wound. Fortunately, this snake is the slowest in its motions, and the most torpid of its kind, otherwise the mischief done by them would be much greater, they being very abundant also in the Llanos. Their favorite haunts are the hollow trunks of decayed trees and deep fissures in the ground. Occasionally they are found coiled among thick clumps of grass, which shelter them from the glaring sun; but they are always ready to strike any intruder. At night they issue forth in quest of game, returning again to their hiding-places before sunrise.

In addition to the foregoing, there are several other kinds in the Apure; among the harmless ones

the *sabanera* is very abundant in the savannas, from which it is named. Some of these are ten feet long, and occasionally even more. They glide over the ground with astonishing rapidity, making all varieties of contortions with their bodies, the forward part of which they keep all the while raised in a vertical position. These snakes are very useful, as they destroy all the poisonous kinds they encounter.

The beautiful coral snake, with alternate rings of red, black, and white, is occasionally seen in the vicinity of ant-holes. Most persons attribute to it very poisonous qualities; but I have examined its mouth carefully and found there no fangs, nor any of the characteristics of poisonous snakes.

In the same category is placed another inoffensive reptile, a cecilia, emphatically styled *culebra de dos cabezas*, or two-headed snake—so named on account of having both ends of its body of equal thickness, while the eyes are almost invisible. It seems the connecting link between snakes and earthworms, partaking of the nature of both, is about a foot long, and rather disproportionately thick for its length, while its body is covered with minute scales. As this snake has the power of moving backward or forward with equal facility, it is supposed by many to be actually possessed of two heads. There is abundant nourishment for it in the ant nests which it frequents, but it feeds also on earthworms, and the larvæ of insects, pursuing them with unrelenting perseverance through the ground. The double motion of this reptile, its great muscular powers and flexibility enable it to penetrate the deepest recesses of a colony of ants, and

to pierce the earth with wonderful expedition in search of prey.

Another singular delusion existing in the Llanos is the general belief that horse and human hair is transformed into snakes, if left for a time to soak in water. The snake resulting from this singular metamorphosis is said to possess all the venom of the most virulent, and a person bitten by one of them must at once resign himself to his fate, as there is no remedy. I recollect having often observed on the margins of ditches and pools of stagnant water curious-looking creatures, not unlike magnified horsehair, with snake-like motions; scarcely any thing like a head being visible, and still less a mouth with the requisite fangs. They are singularly tough and tenacious of life, and may be beaten with a stone without producing any apparent impression upon them. From this fact, and from their capillary appearance, the delusion has doubtless originated.

ANTIDOTES.

Several antidotes are recommended for the venomous bite of snakes; some of them possess real alexipharmic virtues, as the *raiz de mato*, to which I have already alluded under the name of Aristolochia bulbosa, and the *guaco*, (Mikania Guaco,) a composite plant which the learned Mutis has rendered so celebrated through the instrumentality of Humboldt; the others, however, are nothing more than superstitious imaginings, which see in the tooth of a crocodile extracted on Good Friday, or in some unmeaning

orison whispered in the sufferer's ear, greater powers than in all the resources of medical science. Yet such is the leaning of the benighted children of Nature in these regions toward the supernatural, that they always give the preference to whatever savors most of the miraculous. Somewhat of this has doubtless arisen from the mistaken idea that all snakes are poisonous. Thus if it so happen that the incantation is whispered over a person who recovers, having been bitten by a harmless snake, his cure is of course attributed to magic, which is accordingly proclaimed a sovereign remedy for all similar cases in future. Saint Paul, as I have already mentioned, possesses not only the power of arresting the fatal spring of a snake, if invoked in time, but can also neutralize the poison, even when it is circulating through the veins. Notwithstanding my want of faith in the intervention of the saint in question, I confess myself to have been on an occasion extremely puzzled by one of these cherished superstitions, the famous *Oracion de San Pablo*, and up to this period have not been able to account for it in a manner satisfactory to my common sense. As we were one afternoon driving home a herd of cattle, the majordomo's horse was bitten by a *matacaballo*, when at a short distance from the ranch. The rider observed his sudden start, and at once mentioned the cause thereof. The ground, overgrown with grass, was diligently searched, and the snake discovered and killed on the very spot pointed out by the majordomo, who in the mean time had hastened forward with his horse to the ranch, knowing that the strength of the poor animal would soon give way.

Scarcely had he alighted when his horse, covered with a cold sweat, dropped to the ground. A *curandero* or snake doctor immediately presented himself and commenced a series of incantations over the prostrate animal, which it was supposed would soon counteract the poison. I was anxious to administer spirits of hartshorn, a well-authenticated remedy for such cases, but the Llaneros opposed this resolutely, on the ground that it would interfere with their own. The *Oracion* was accordingly whispered in the horse's ear and the patient then removed to a convenient pasture, where he could find abundant feed if fate ever restored his appetite. Here he was left, rolling upon the ground and moaning piteously, while I was positively assured by the men that in the course of two hours, at most, he would be completely restored, and my scepticism confounded. Singularly enough, the remedy acted in this case like a real charm; at the appointed time the horse started to his feet and commenced browsing the grass around him with as much gusto as if he had experienced no ailment whatsoever. Whether the venom of the snake was not, in this instance, strong enough to kill the horse; or, what is more probable, the reptile's fang might not have penetrated deep enough, are questions which cannot be decided, but shortly afterward the same horse, a beautiful but wild and vicious young stallion, came very near kicking to death the *curandero* who restored him to health.

The Llaneros are not, however, the only people in the country who have faith in these miraculous cures. It is more or less entertained throughout the country

by persons more enlightened in other respects than they. It is asserted of a famous *curandero* in the Valleys of Aragua, that in extreme cases, if prevented from going in person to the patient, it was only necessary to send his hat! By placing this talisman on the injured man's head, it would not only afford immediate relief, but arrest the progress of the venom until the owner could come himself to perfect the cure.

Another singular practice obtains among Llaneros; it is that of inoculation with the juice of certain plants possessing alexipharmic virtues, after which the most poisonous snakes may be handled with impunity. It is asserted, moreover, that *cerrados*—as individuals thus inoculated are termed—are not only proof against the bite of these reptiles, but can attract them around their persons by merely clapping of hands or whistling for them in fields where they abound. Having never witnessed any of these experiments, I will neither undertake to uphold the truth of this assertion, nor will I question its veracity; but there are hundreds of reliable persons in the country who will unhesitatingly swear to its efficacy; among them, is the testimony of Dr. Benites, a professional gentleman who has published the result of his experiments in a small book on the materia medica of the country. With the view of ascertaining the alleged properties of the guaco he devoted a great portion of his time while at La Victoria in experimenting with various kinds of snakes; from him I quote the following passage: "The guaco possesses in a high degree the

faculty of preserving man and animals in general from the terrible and fatal effects of the bites of serpents. This valuable secret, discovered in Bogota by the celebrated naturalist, Don Celestino Mútis, in 1788, remains still as such among some *curanderos* of our own country, who, under certain mysterious forms, and availing themselves of the fangs of serpents, puncture several slight incisions in certain parts of the body, which they fill with the powdered leaves of the guaco previously made dry, and administer the same internally mixed in common rum. This property of the guaco is so reliable, inoculation by means of the juice such as was practised by Mútis himself so well authenticated, and the facts concerning it so well attested, that there cannot longer exist the least doubt in regard to its efficacy. I wished to convince myself by actual experiment, and can testify that in a thousand trials of inoculation practised by myself in different ways on patients whom I allowed to be bitten by various kinds of snakes, I never knew one to fail. Suffice it to say that the principal amusement of children in this place is to catch, carry about and play with snakes, and that even young ladies keep them in their bosoms or coil them around their necks."

It appears, nevertheless, absolutely necessary to renew the inoculation at different epochs of a man's life, as in the case of vaccination it loses its power after a time. It was no doubt owing to his neglect of the rule, that a gentleman in the town of Ocumare some years ago fell a victim to his blind confidence in this sort of inoculation. Don N. Ugarte had kept

a rattlesnake in a drawer during four years; with it he occasionally amused himself, no more harm resulting therefrom than if it had been a kitten. One day on returning home from his rounds in the plantation, he felt in the humor of playing a little with his old pet, and accordingly took him out of his berth and placed him upon the writing desk before him. One of the children who had also been inoculated happening to be near, the father suggested that he should kiss the reptile; to this, the child objected very decidedly; the foolish parent, however, insisting, the mother interfered and begged that her child should not be compelled to touch the loathsome creature; whereupon the father exclaimed: "How foolish you are! I will show you how it kisses me. Now, then, pet, give me a kiss;" and so saying, he leaned forward toward the snake; true to its instincts, the reptile sprang to his lips and implanted such a kiss that its master never recovered from the effects. Both fangs of the snake went quite through his upper lip, and he at once felt himself to be mortally wounded. A physician was sent for without delay, but he expired before assistance could reach him.

The guaco is employed, moreover, in various other disorders of the system with great success. In chronic rheumatism it is an invaluable remedy both in the form of poultices made of the fresh leaves, or by simply rubbing the part affected with a decoction of the plant in spirits, and taking internally one or two ounces of the expressed juice, morning and evening. Administered in the latter form it is an efficacious remedy against hydrophobia, if given immediately

after the person has been bitten by a mad dog. General Paez was thus saved, when a youth, from this dreadful scourge of tropical countries; he has nevertheless retained in after life some evil effects of the virus still in his system, manifesting itself in a tendency to severe spasmodic affections, especially at sight of a snake, which invariably induces violent convulsions.

Next to the guaco in importance as an alexipharmic, may be classed the *raiz de mato*, including several varieties of Aristolochias, the roots of which are intensely bitter. As its name implies, it is said to afford the *mato*—a large species of lizard—a prompt antidote against the bite of his old antagonist, the snake. There would seem to exist some ancient grudge between these two reptiles, many persons asserting that whenever they

ARISTOLOCHIA APURENSIS.—NATURAL SIZE.

come in sight of one another, they instantly rush to the attack, the *mato* never failing to overcome his rival by his superior botanical knowledge; this, or his instinct, prompts him to seek the plant, and swallowing some of the leaves, returns recuperated to the fight.*

It was doubtless from this circumstance the knowledge was first obtained respecting the valuable properties of the plants; and it is not a little remarkable that people in different parts of the world, unacquainted with the botanical structure of Aristolo-

* Dr. Lindley, speaking of the properties of Aristolochias in general, and more especially of A. serpentaria—a North American species—observes: "As its name implies, it is used as an antidote to serpent bites, a quality in which several other species participate, among which may be mentioned A. trilobata, a Jamaica plant, also employed as a sudden and powerful sudorific; and the Cartagena A. unguicida, concerning which Jaquin writes, that the juice of the root, chewed and introduced into the mouth of a serpent, so stupefies it that it may for a long time be handled with impunity; if the reptile is compelled to swallow a few drops, it perishes in convulsions. The root is also reputed to be an antidote to serpent bites. This plant is probably the celebrated guaco of the Columbians,* concerning whose supposed efficacy as an alexipharmic so much has been said by Humboldt and others; at least a leaf of what is either this species or one closely allied to it, has been given me by Dr. Hancock as the genuine guaco. It is not a little remarkable that the power of stupefying snakes, ascribed in Cartagena to A. anguicida, should be also attributed to A. pallida, longa, bœtica, serpenvirens, and rotunda, which are said to be the plants with which the Egyptian jugglers stupefy the snakes they play with. In medicine these plants are slightly aromatic, stimulating tonics, useful in the latter stages of low fever; the taste is

* This is evidently a mistake, as the plant alluded to here belongs to the extensive family of Compositæ; probably the great resemblance which its leaves bear to those of Aristolochias—being deeply cordate-acuminate—has given rise to it.
THE AUTHOR.

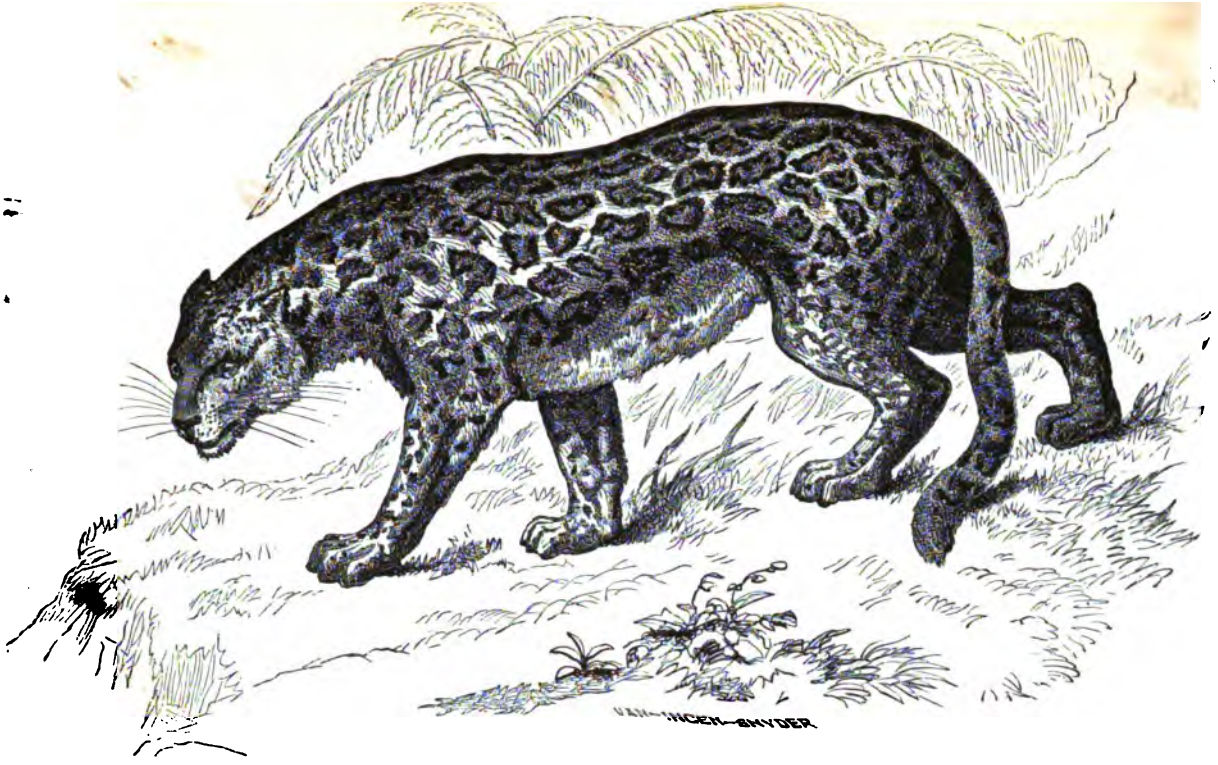
chias, should have discovered in them properties of equal merit, and classed them under the same vernacular name.

bitter and acrid; the odor strong and disagreeable: they are said to be sudorific, and have been employed as emmenagogues in amenorrhœa."
LINDLEY'S *Vegetable Kingdom.*

CHAPTER XVI.

TIGER STORIES.

On the second night from our arrival at the Mata, just as most of our party in their hammocks were swinging off into dreamland, the ominous cry of *El Tigre!*—the tiger—was heard in the direction of the camp fires, where a few of the men still lingered. As if lifted by a gust of the pampero, every man dropped from his aërial couch, and in an instant the whole camp became a scene of the wildest confusion. Firebrands flew in every direction, by the uncertain glare of which we gained occasional glimpses of the jaguar, for such was the intruder, prowling near us like a huge cat. The horses snorted in terror, the men shouted vociferously, while our brave Mónico commenced drumming upon his pots and kettles as if they were so many gongs, with which in his capacity of cook he summoned us to dinner, creating such an uproar as drowned the voices of men and beasts, and was horrible enough to frighten away a legion of jaguars. The odor of the savory spits, at all hours faithful to their posts around the camp fires, had


VAN-INGEN-SNYDER

doubtless proved the magnet of attraction to his spotted majesty, who, probably disgusted with the style of his reception, made a precipitate retreat to his stronghold in the forest, growling indignation at our want of hospitality.

Although among the natives he is commonly known by the name of the tiger, this animal is actually the jaguar or Felix Onza of naturalists, no real tigers existing in any part of America. It nevertheless exerts the same tyranny over other animals as does the tiger or leopard in the hot regions of the Old World, differing from its congener principally in the form of the marks upon his skin, which in the jaguar of America are rounded or in rings, therein unlike the long stripes of the Bengal tiger. In another species common to the forests of Guayana, the skin is nearly black, the spots being invisible except in the broad sunlight. This is considered the most sanguinary and ferocious. Some jaguars attain a great size, measuring seven feet from the nose to the tail. They are sufficiently powerful to kill an ox or horse and drag them off over the highest fences.

When the excitement occasioned by the intrusion of the nocturnal thief had subsided, few of us were inclined for sleep; several of our men, therefore, who had been at different times active participators in similar adventures, volunteered entertaining us for the remainder of the night with some interesting stories concerning this lord of South American forests. From them I gathered many useful facts respecting his habits and disposition, which I shall recount as nearly as possible verbatim.

Although, perhaps, the most powerful among wild beasts of this continent, the jaguar is by no means as terrible as might be supposed from the renown of his prowess. Occasionally when hard pressed by hunger he ventures within the precincts of man, robbing the corrals of the farmhouse of their defenceless inmates. Many instances are also related of his having attacked and carried off a solitary traveller to his lair in the woods; but he usually evinces the profoundest respect for man unless driven to extremities, when he has been known to set at defiance the combined efforts of a host of men and dogs. When thus, by a too intimate acquaintance with the people and flocks of some particular community, he has gone so far as to levy blackmail upon them, the appellation of *cebado*—as in the case of the crocodile—is given to the jaguar. An animal of this description is said to possess wonderful daring and instinct, making him by far the most dangerous of the class, attacking not only tame animals in the corrals, but even individuals are frequently assailed and devoured by him. It is said also that when he has once tasted human blood, he becomes insatiable in his eagerness to procure this luxury. They are then so dangerous, that the owners of cattle farms usually call a meeting of all the *hateros* in the vicinity, capable of handling lazo or lance—firearms being rarely used in expeditions of this kind—and with the assistance of a pack of well-trained hounds of a peculiar breed, called *tigreros* in consequence, they surround the wood supposed to harbor the tiger, and beating carefully about the jungle, drive him out into the open plain, where men on horseback are stationed ready to

lazo the game as it breaks cover. To ensure success, it is only requisite that the horses be steady and well trained to the sport; and as the tiger, conscious of his danger, frequently refuses to quit the jungle, a number of daring matadors are also needed to drive him out or attack him in his lair, assisted in this by the dogs, which, by harassing him on all sides, divert him from the assailants.

Jaguars were at one time so numerous in the Llanos, that their ravages upon the calves and young foals were truly frightful. This circumstance, in addition to the value attached in other countries to their beautiful skins, have contributed to reduce the numbers very considerably, as whenever they make their appearance they are eagerly pursued.

In its wild state the jaguar is an exceedingly beautiful animal; his motions particularly easy and graceful, and possessing wonderful agility in bounding among the trees and tall grass of the savannas. When watching for prey, he generally crouches upon the ground, the fore paws stretched out, resting his head between them in a manner very similar to that of the domestic cat; and as he climbs trees with a facility almost equal to that of monkeys, these are in exceeding dread of him on that account.

The haunts usually preferred by the jaguar appear to be swampy borders of marshes and lagoons overgrown with reeds and wild plantain, where they are sure of finding plenty of game. Water hogs or capyvaras especially, are easy prey, as they cannot move except in short jumps. It is asserted that where these animals abound, there is little to be feared from the

jaguar, which always prefers the wild animals of the field for food, becoming bolder and more dangerous to man in proportion as these disappear.

My earliest recollection of the jaguar dates from the time when the famous town of Achaguas was head-quarters for the patriot army commanded by my father. I was a little fellow not more than three years of age, when a foraging party fell in with a tigress and her cub; the latter they secured and brought to Achaguas after a desperate struggle with the mother. The extreme beauty and youth of the captive soon gained the sympathies and favor of a host of admirers, especially those of the female department, in the household of Colonel Mujica, who purchased it and consigned it to their care. Under their special protection and good treatment it quickly grew strong enough to take part in all squabbles among the dogs and cats of the family, which animals always form a prominent feature in all well-regulated Llanero establishments. At first the new pet was allowed the entire freedom of the premises, associating very readily with every stranger who visited the house, and evincing none of the disagreeable traits ascribed to these animals. I, who participated in all its juvenile antics, and who supposed it to be only a large cat, very soon became its favorite playmate, until on one occasion it carried its pranks so far as to throw me down, at the same time tearing my clothing to rags with its claws. From this moment it was considered expedient to chain up my playfellow, and accordingly he was secured to a pillar

in the corridor of the house. It is related of this favorite, that having afterward broken its chain, it speedily found the way to the poultry yard where the Colonel kept his game chickens, not one of which was left to fight its battles over. For this unpardonable breach of discipline the young tiger received so sound a castigation as to cripple the poor fellow for life.

Numberless are the tricks recorded of the lame tiger of Colonel Mujica, they for a time constituting the principal amusement of those of the army who were in the habit of frequenting the Colonel's quarters to while away their idle hours at the favorite game of monte. What finally became of my uncouth playfellow, I am unable to state; the probability is that he, as well as most of the brave champions of that memorable epoch, is dead; at all events, they are buried .... in the dust of the past.

In a solitary ranch, not far from San Jaime, there once lived a poor widow, who, out of compassion for a young cub which had been picked up by some vaqueros undertook to raise it with the milk of her own goats, sheltering it at night from the damp under the folds of her bed, covering and treating the foundling with as much affection as though it were her child. In return, the little fellow became so attached to its adopted mother, that it could not endure a moment's separation from her, and would lie like a cat by the fireside while she devoted herself to the occupations of the kitchen. As it grew older and stronger, the woman's slender stock of goats was rapidly diminished by its repeated depredations; it was therefore

deemed prudent to give it wider range than the widow's little farm-yard, and it was encouraged to seek for game in the neighboring woods. Whenever successful in these excursions, the intelligent creature invariably brought some home, and with seeming pride laid it at the feet of its benefactress. On one occasion, some of her neighbors having come to pass the day with her, she thought that as game was plentiful and easily obtained, she would spare such of her goats as had thus far escaped the teeth of her favorite, and, instead, procure with its assistance a supply of venison with which to treat her guests. Accordingly, leaving the hut in their charge, she and her efficient hunter started for the woods, proposing to be back in time to cook the dinner; but to the astonishment of her visitors, the dinner-hour arrived, then the night, but no tidings of the hunters; and up to this time, I believe, nothing has been heard about either of the former tenants of the solitary ranch, although it is not difficult to imagine the poor widow's fate.

We had once in our employ a stout and powerful sambo, who on account of his name—Bolivar—and his great muscular development, had received the sobriquet of Bolivote, or big Bolivar. Great was his pride in possessing not only the same patronymic as the distinguished General of his name, but also some deep scars on his right arm, inflicted by the claws of a jaguar, which he improved every opportunity of displaying.

Bolivote had been riding hard during a whole day, and feeling rather weary, sought repose under

the shade of a clump of palm trees, allowing his horse meanwhile to crop the grass near by. He had lain down at the foot of a palm, and almost fallen asleep, when he was roused by a rustling of the leaves overhead, and looking up to ascertain the cause, beheld with astonishment a large jaguar in the act of springing upon him. He started to his feet, but was within the tiger's grasp ere he could unsheath his sword. Without losing a moment he plunged his finger into one of the fiery eyeballs glaring upon him, and succeeded in forcing it from its socket. The pain thus inflicted was so acute, that the tiger retreated with fearful yells; yet not before he had mangled with teeth and claws the sturdy arm which had punished him so severely.

During our journey across the pampas, we were shown the spot where not long before a jaguar had attacked a woman. Her preservation, also, was due to presence of mind, and to the fact of being armed with a *machete* or cutlass, with which she had intended cutting a load of wood for domestic uses. The wood being near at hand, she was in the daily habit of fearlessly traversing the plain alone. On one occasion she went *al monte*, to the fields, as they say there, with the intention of collecting her usual load of fagots. No sooner did she commence breaking the sticks, than a deep rumbling growl which seemed to shake the ground beneath her feet, almost paralyzed her movements. Although the sound was somewhat familiar, yet she never before had heard it so near at hand, and she was therefore instantly con-

scious of her perilous situation. Knowing that an attempt at precipitate flight would only contribute to increase the anger of the tiger, she decided accordingly upon concealing herself and remaining perfectly quiet behind a large tree. Vain endeavor! in a few moments a large jaguar glided from the tangled jungle and stood before the terrified woman, his eyes shooting fire, his open mouth parched with thirst of blood. At the dread sight she gave herself up for lost, and began reciting aloud a prayer to her patron saint, which the tiger answered with another fearful roar. The jaguar then commenced tearing up the roots of the nearest tree, looking the while like a huge cat sharpening his claws. Then gradually approaching the woman's hiding-place until within a few yards, with a bound he cleared the space separating them, and alighted at the foot of the tree behind which she was sheltered. Without a moment's loss, the woman aimed a blow with her *machete*, severing one of the paws which grasped the tree. This partly disabling him, he retreated a few paces; but soon returning to the attack, received a second blow, this time on his head, with such good effect that he fell stunned upon the ground. It is needless to add that our heroine did not wait to see what might have been the final result of this blow, but springing from her hiding-place, she so belabored him with her *machete* as to completely spoil his skin for marketable purposes.

Among the troop of idlers and adventurers always following the camp, we were favored at Mata Gorda with the company of a famous story teller of the

Apure, who, in wonderful encounters with wild beasts, and marvellous adventures, might almost rival the celebrated Baron Munchausen, or even the sailor of Arabian Nights celebrity. His real name was B.; but owing to his diminutive stature and cunning, he had been honored with the familiar appellation of *Tio Conejo.** Indeed, so small was he, that if we credit his statement, he was often mistaken for his own baby, usurping its place in the cradle for the purpose of enjoying the kisses and other *petites caresses* usually lavished by the female sex upon these tender innocents. Among the various incidents of his eventful life, he had, as a matter of course, something to say concerning tigers.

"Once upon a time," said our humorous companion, "I was by the banks of the river Uribante, and there had an opportunity of cheating *Tio Tigre* in his endeavors to make mince meat of my humble self. Returning one day from a successful fishing excursion, I was enjoying my usual siesta when *El Tio* made up his mind, as it seemed, to pay me an unexpected visit, doubtless with the intention of robbing me of the products of my industry, which I had dressed and salted a few minutes before. Happily I have for obvious reasons accustomed my eyes to keep alternate watch when camping out alone, as was the case in this instance, so that if approached by any evil-disposed individual, I am always able to avoid

* *Tio Tigre* and *Tio Conejo*—Uncle Tiger and Uncle Rabbit. These are the heroes of endless adventures, the mother's never-failing source of amusement to her children, supposed to have taken place in the woods of Venezuela.

danger through the watchfulness of the one on duty; when this sentinel becomes weary, I allow it to sleep and rouse its fellow.

"Well, *Señores*, as I have said already, one of my watchmen observing the tiger coming toward me, I sprang from my hammock with the intention of giving him a warm reception; but, luckily for the spotted vagabond, my *cuchillo*, which is always by my side, was left forgotten among the heap of fish I had been dressing. Thus cut off from my only means of defence, and observing near by an immense gourd of a size such as is rarely seen in these parts, I slipped into it just when *Tio Tigre* thought he had me."

The narrative was here interrupted by a sceptical individual from the audience insisting upon being enlightened as to the precise dimensions of that gourd; the reply was, "Why, Sirs, here is nothing extraordinary. I have seen squashes at the foot of the Cordilleras, each of which would be a load sufficient for a bongo. I once lost a pack of mules during the night, and after searching for them around the base of what I supposed a hillock, I found the sagacious animals inside one of these squashes—for such was the seeming hillock—supping at leisure on the succulent pulp, having gnawed for themselves a passage to the interior. But to return to my story. The tiger, enraged at my sudden disappearance, commenced a deliberate attack with teeth and claws upon the tough and slippery shell, with no other result than that of rolling the gourd with me in it further from him.

"It was hugely amusing to watch from my stronghold the tactics of my assailant; at one moment

crouched a short distance off upon the ground, he would watch the mysterious object much as a cat watches a mouse; then with a sudden spring pounced again upon the gourd, thus causing it to roll before him like a ball. My only fear was, that the tiger in one of these furious onsets might precipitate me into the stream below. I was not then aware that water in deep rivers reaches no lower than the base of their steep banks, which act as support for the whole body of water above, thus leaving a clear expanse underneath and the bed of the river entirely dry, a remarkable fact which I discovered on another occasion when diving in the Orinoco for a lost treasure belonging to the monks.

"That which I feared at last came to pass. The gourd, pushed by the tiger, fell spinning into the water, and I found myself sailing down the stream escorted by a band of hungry crocodiles, who watched me with eager eyes and open jaws, until my patron saint in the form of a humane porpoise came to my assistance, frightened off the ugly wretches, and receiving me on his back, landed me in safety on a desert shore, where, *amigos*, you will have to leave me for the present, as it is almost morning, and we must sleep an hour or two before starting for the *Rodeo*."

THE PANTHER-TIGER.

Although principally a sojourner in the more elevated parts of the country, the panther is occasionally seen descending toward the plains in search of

the abundant fare of the pampas. He resembles the jaguar in many respects, and is called in consequence, *tigre de serrania*, or mountain tiger. He is, however, easily distinguished from the former by the shape of his head, which in the panther is more acute toward the snout, while the spots on his skin are smaller and more closely set.

The panther is by far the bolder and more sanguinary of the two; he frequents the mountain passes, waylaying stray animals and solitary travellers; and there are many cases on record in which he has displayed his bloodthirsty propensities by boldly seeking food even in the very haunts of man.

Some of the mountain districts of Venezuela are so infested with them, that few travellers ever venture to journey alone there; as, for instance, the *montaña de* Capaya, east of Caracas, and the Cerro de Aroa to the west, both famed for the number and boldness of these animals. Under cover of the dense forests with which those mountains are clothed to the very summit, they lie in wait. Not long since, a traveller from the village of Aroa, finding the distance greater than he had anticipated, was compelled to pass the night in the forest. Fearing the panthers, he slung his hammock between two palm trees as high as possible from the ground, hoping doubtless thereby to escape them, but his precautions proved of no avail; the poor traveller fell a prey to one of these sanguinary beasts. A few days after, a party of muleteers passing along the same route, found on the spot where the sad tragedy had been enacted, evidence of the bloody assault. Deep furrows

ploughed in the ground between the palm trees, showed that the panther must have made frequent and tremendous leaps to reach the unfortunate traveller; but with the exception of the torn hammock, there remained no vestige of the victim.

My first vacation trip from the terrors of a South American school and the angry visage of a harsh preceptor, is still fresh in my mind, as is also the fright I received upon the road from an imaginary panther while endeavoring to reach before daylight the nearest inn upon the route.

The road from the capital to the Valleys of Aragua—our destination—lies for the most part over a high ridge of mountains with precipitous sides, interspersed here and there with deep ravines and almost impenetrable thickets of forest trees, fit lurking-places for wild beasts and banditti. The extreme steepness of the road renders the aid of mules, or horses of superior mettle, imperative, and for this exigency our attentive guides had well provided before leaving Caracas.

The party was principally composed of young gentlemen and their attendants, all like myself bound to the fertile regions of Aragua, where we purposed passing the holidays with our families; and a wilder set of madcaps it would have been difficult to find. Every moment witnessed a malicious trick, sometimes tickling the mules under the cruppers with whips, until, worried into frenzy, they plunged fearfully along the road, placing us in danger of being hurled into eternity through the yawning chasms be-

neath. Sometimes jerking the tail of a neighbor's mule, causing the animal to whirl so violently as to almost destroy its balance. Occasionally some of the party might be seen scrambling up the rugged side of a mountain after bright colored insects or wild berries. At length, the steepness of the ascent no longer permitting the continuance of our pranks, the guides entertained us with frightful stories of a tiger said to lurk in these mountains; but chiefly with accounts of horrid murders perpetrated at various points along our route, which, judging from the many crosses and stone mounds raised to the victims by the piety of wayfarers, must have been truly appalling in number. In those parts it is customary to mark the spot where a crime of the kind has been committed, with a wooden cross, at whose foot every passer-by casts a stone, muttering at the same time a prayer for the repose of the unshriven soul. One of these memorials was erected to a poor fellow, whose throat had been cut and body frightfully mutilated for a new poncho and a few reals. At another, a tiger had seized a wearied poultry carrier imprudently asleep by the side of his coop, and devoured him and his chickens. In another instance, the tiger appeared suddenly among a group of muleteers quietly refreshing themselves by the murmuring waters of a mountain stream, and after scattering the affrighted group, helped himself to their repast.

These stories, told with great vivacity and much embellishment, excited in a high degree the fervid imaginations of the youthful cavalcade, causing them as night approached to keep close together. They, however, did not deter me, who had ever a peculiar

fondness for the beautiful in nature, from loitering somewhat in the rear of my companion to gaze in wondering admiration upon the grandeur and wild luxuriance of the scene which on all sides met my eyes. Absorbed in contemplation I was riding slowly along, when suddenly, and to my great horror and dismay, I found myself in presence of, apparently, the dreaded tiger of the mountains. My imagination, roused by the exciting stories of the muleteers, showed me the spotted brute seated upon his haunches, his sinister eyes gazing steadily at me over his right shoulder. Notwithstanding this pacific attitude, a thrill of terror chilled my veins, while in spite of the cold prevailing on those mountain ranges, heavy drops of perspiration streamed from my trembling body. The tiger seeming spell-bound with my sudden apparition, I endeavored to cry aloud for help; but terror had deprived me of voice. I then concluded to dismount and place the mule between myself and the tiger, which impulse was suddenly checked as I caught sight of the yawning precipice beside me. I had therefore no alternative, other than the ignominious one of sliding down in the rear of my mule, a feat I rapidly accomplished without in the least inconveniencing the patient creature, which all the while stood quietly awaiting my pleasure. At this moment the moon, until then partially obscured by the dense fog, shone brilliantly upon the scene, when, to my great mortification and greater relief, I discovered that the ferocious tiger of my imagination was only the fallen branch of a tree covered with leaves, which last my fertile fancy had mistaken for the spotted skin of the dreaded mountain tiger.

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOOTING ADVENTURES.

We were now in the very midst of the most splendid shooting ground of the republic, and each day my quest after the feathered inhabitants of those fine groves was rewarded with an abundant supply of *pavas*, *guacharacas*, and that most noble and beautiful of all game birds, the *pauji* or crested curassow of South America, (Crax alector.) This fine species is found in all parts of the country, especially in the woods of the *tierra caliente*, where it can be tracked without difficulty by the shrill and prolonged whistle with which it calls its mate, and which can be heard from a long distance. It appears not to notice the presence of the hunter, allowing itself to be shot down without making the least effort to avoid the danger. This bird is nearly the same size as the domestic turkey, and being easily domesticated, could very well supply the place of that fowl, as the flesh is juicy and of exquisite flavor. Its plumage is peculiarly rich and beautiful, the head and neck being white and the rest of its body of a rich olive brown, excepting the wing tips which are black. An elegant

tuft of curled, glossy black feathers surmounts the head, adding greatly to the splendor of its appearance. In the more elevated parts of the country there is another species, the *paujī de piedra* or cashew-bird, so called from a singular excrescence on the top of its head, in color a bluish gray, and bearing some resemblance to a polished nodule of slate. This bird only inhabits woods growing at about four thousand feet of elevation, and if possible exceeds in beauty the preceding. Its plumage of a deep black, with tints of olive green, contrasts exquisitely with that of the bill and legs, which are respectively of a brilliant scarlet and deep yellow. They are even more easily domesticated than the preceding, and are therefore to be met with in many a farm yard of the Cordillera, where they form one of its most graceful ornaments.

The *guacharaca* or South American pheasant may also be classed among the finest game birds of Venezuela, and is extremely abundant everywhere. In riding along the solitary roads through the plains and fertile vales of the *tierra caliente*, the traveller may have often noticed at all hours of the day and even of the night, more especially at the approach of rain, a most discordant chattering in harsh and shrill notes; it is the song of the *guacharaca*, a bird of about the size of the domestic hen, bearing some resemblance to the female pheasant, and like it of a chocolate color. It is of a sociable nature, always congregating in flocks of twenty or thirty. The moment one of the number leads the chant, all the rest join in chorus, uttering distinctly in hoarse repetition *guacharaca*, *guacha-*

raca; hence the name of this bird. These cries are invariably responded to by all the flocks in the neighborhood, so that in a short time the whole valley rings from end to end with their discordant voices. Like all other gallinaceous birds, it is very easily domesticated with the *paujies*, *pavas*, *gallinetas*, and several other wild fowl with which the rural inhabitant loves to stock his yard.

In addition to the foregoing, there are also in the Llanos all kinds of wild pigeons, doves, plovers, and quails, the latter so abundant that they can easily be killed by the hundred with a stick. And indeed, so great is the almost endless variety of fine birds in these wilds, that it would be impossible, within the limits of these pages, to enter into further detail concerning them.

Deer were also very plentiful, both in the *mata*, whither they were attracted by its refreshing shade, and in the meadows around it; but having no dogs with us, and being unwilling to tire our horses in unprofitable sport, we refrained from their pursuit. One afternoon, however, much to my surprise, a merry, clever fellow by the name of Casimiro, who had followed us from the valleys, entered the camp bending under the weight of a fine doe which he had killed that afternoon, together with a buck that an Indian boy was carrying for him. On our complimenting his extraordinary skill in killing two deer in so short a space of time, he informed us that he could have brought down any number of them, and intended retracing his steps at once for more. This proved no mere boast, for quickly returning to the woods, he

soon after again madē his appearance with a similar load, which, seating himself by the fire, he at once commenced skinning.

I inquired of Casimiro the occasion of his success; he replied by producing a tube of bamboo about the thickness of the thumb, one end being covered with a thin membrane. On blowing through the other end, a sound precisely resembling the bleating of a young fawn resulted. It is in this manner that the treacherous hunter decoys the anxious doe, whose every motion he watches from the place of his concealment behind the branches of some tree, usually the algarrobo, of whose pods deer are very fond. This detestable expedient is, I am glad to state, rarely practised unless by hungry sportsmen; and as we were then in the midst of plenty, and venison besides not being much relished by the beef-eating population of the Llanos, we had fortunately no occasion to resort to it in any of our subsequent deer-shooting adventures.

Another device much practised by Indians in these cases, consists in assuming the guise of the great *garzon* or soldier crane of the pampas, whose company appears always welcome to deer grazing in the open prairie. This crane, which I have mentioned in a former chapter, as being at the least five feet in height, is mounted upon a pair of long slender legs, giving it the appearance of walking on stilts; their plumage is a dazzling white, and they have a pouch under the throat of a brilliant scarlet color. The bill, too, is quite a remarkable feature, fully a foot

long and very wide at the base, which permits of swallowing at a mouthful large fish, as well as frogs, toads and snakes, of which last it partakes with equal relish. All that the hunter has to do, who intends ensnaring his deer with borrowed plumes, is to hide his own face with a mask, which must have a long bill resembling that of the crane attached to it. The mask being securely fastened on, he finishes his toilet by covering his body to his knees with a white garment.

In this simple disguise the hunter, equipped besides with his gun or bow and arrows, makes straight for the game, careful however to approach it in a contrary direction to that of the wind, deer possessing peculiarly acute powers of scent. On one occasion, I was fortunate enough to shoot three of these shy animals out of a small herd, before the rest took the alarm.

Our young *attaché*, Roseliano, who had witnessed the universal success of these devices, envying the achievements of his elders, determined to try what he could accomplish for himself in this line. Accordingly, choosing for his intended victim a fine stag grazing at no great distance from the camp, he forthwith proceeded on his experiment. Having no *garzon's* beak at hand, nor even a white garment, with which to personate the feathered dandy of the savannas, he was for some time at a loss how to approach the game without alarming it, when a malicious companion persuaded him that he could ensnare the deer equally well if he presented himself simply *in puris naturalibus*, assuring him that the animal would indubitably conceive him to be a rare bird or at least a new species of *garzon*. Roseliano, finally convinced by these specious representations, quickly denuded himself; then, gun in hand, and taking all necessary precautions in regard to the wind, which was blowing quite fresh at the time, immediately gave chase.

At first the stag appeared to pay little heed to the enticing object, and allowed it to approach within range; but the moment the gun was raised, the stag turned round and trotted slowly off, waving his short tail defiantly. Sometimes he stopped for a little while, seeming to examine from head to foot this unfeathered biped, afterward resuming his masticatious with perfect nonchalance. At such times Roseliano, with due precautions, would creep slowly toward him, when invariably the deer, almost within range, again trotted composedly down the plain, not even giving his pursuer a chance to aim at him. Occasionally he

would turn about, stamp his tiny hoof upon the hard ground, and again move off wagging his little tail at him as though to say, "No, you don't."

Thus went each, still eluding still pursuing, for a long distance, without either seeming at all willing to part company, until the burning sun began to tell upon the bare skin of the young hunter, who experienced besides sundry painful reminders from the thorny sensitive plants under foot. At length growing somewhat desperate, he dashed ahead and sent a random shot after the deer without success, the ball striking the ground far short of the mark. The deer seemed now to think he had received notice to quit, for, to the great disgust of poor Roseliano, he at once bounded gracefully over the tall grass and disappeared from view.

Within a stone's throw of our camp were several lagoons abounding in terrapins and turtles, whilst on all sides the savannas teemed with many delicious quadrupeds. These, on account of their *penchant* for the water, have been declared cold-blooded animals by the church, and can in consequence be eaten as fish; and as it was Holy Week, a grand hunt was proposed for the purpose of providing the camp with food which should be wholesome as well for the soul as the body. Accordingly, early on Good Friday morning the whole disposable force assembled in front of the ranch; and after a partial organization, all started on foot in different directions, some in quest of *cachicamos* or armadillos, others for *galapagos* and tortoises, while the less fastidious did not disdain to try their skill upon those water hogs, the *chigüires* or capyvaras.

The results of the hunt far exceeded our expectation, as in less than four hours nearly three hundred armadillos, and probably as many turtles, were brought into camp. The flesh of the *chigüire* is not much relished by the Llaneros, although it is excellent for hams when properly cured and smoked; accordingly the carcasses, the hind quarters being removed, were left to the turkey buzzards.

The flesh of the armadillo is most delicious, tasting very much like young pig; and being always roasted in the shell—a thick cuirass formed of successive horny plates—all its juices are effectually preserved. It is, however, very rich eating, from the excess of fatness, and therefore liable to produce indigestion, if not followed by a good dose of aguardiente and a strong sauce of Chili peppers. It is also said to exert very injurious effects on persons predisposed to syphilitic disorders of the system, developing incipient ulcers and various other cutaneous diseases.

The armadillo is a harmless, curiously-formed little quadruped, about the size of a common hedgehog; it burrows in the ground, spending the greater part of the day in cool retirement, issuing at dusk or very early in the morning in search of food; this consists principally of worms, the larvæ of insects or perchance a young snake from the broods that take shelter among the cells of its subterranean abode—whether by permission or as intruders, remains to be ascer-

tained. The fact is, however, that many of these burrows are so full of snakes, that it is necessary on account of them to exercise considerable caution when passing near the abodes of armadillos. Two little owls called *aguaita-caminos*, road-watchers, usually stand like sentinels at the entrance of these burrows, and by their constant flutterings around the sportsman, and their uncouth motions, almost invariably succeed in warning the armadillo. Nevertheless, if the hunter approach in front, he can always secure it with his hands as its vision in that direction is entirely obscured by the position of the plates with which the head is covered. When attacked from the rear or sides, it makes quickly for its burrow; but if the hunter, however, be sufficiently expert, he may succeed in getting hold of the long, horny tail of the animal before it disappears entirely from view. Even then, as this creature possesses the power of swelling its body when thus attacked, it is rather difficult to drag it out, unless by some means the size of the burrow can be enlarged. There is then danger of severe wounds from its sharp claws, as well as of being bitten by some of the poisonous snakes which share its home.

What affinity there is existing between this quadruped and the finny inhabitants of the water, prompting their classification among amphibia, I was unable to ascertain; but although the capyvara and several others placed by the church under that category, possess, it is true, great powers of resistance while in water, the reverse is assuredly the case with regard to the armadillo, which always seeks the higher

grounds so as to escape submersion during the great floods; and I have often found it in the midst of extensive plains where no moisture excepting the dews of night is to be seen for miles around.

When all the different parties, participants in the hunting excursion, were once more seated round the camp fires, it was quite amusing to hear their accounts of the various incidents connected with it; one had got hold of a rattlesnake's tail, mistaking it for that of an armadillo; another had stumbled over a crocodile while diving for turtles in a shallow creek; a third had his toe bitten off by caribes; while not a few experienced more or less severe shocks from electric eels. In front of many of the fires, soon blazing under the trees, were arrayed on long wooded spits entire carcasses of the armadillos split along the belly and kept open by means of cross bars of green boughs. Directly the coals were sufficiently hot in the centre of the fires, the galapagos were all beheaded and thrown, still alive, into the midst of the burning embers. These chelonia, like all other amphibia, are exceedingly tenacious of life; their sufferings, therefore, must doubtless be great under this lingering death, as was manifested by their long-continued struggles in the fire.

The Llaneros say that these turtles, according to their most exquisite gastronomers, should be eaten where there is no light, asserting that they will then be found more rich and juicy; but the actual reason for this, as I afterward ascertained to my great disgust, was that some of the choicest morsels are pre-

cisely those which to be eaten must not be seen, as otherwise they would unhesitatingly be rejected.

There are several varieties of fresh water tortoises in the Apure, an abundant and wholesome food for the inhabitants. The most common are the *galapagos*, a large species of terrapin, the *terecay* and the *arrau* or great turtle of the Orinoco, concerning which the celebrated Father Gumilla wrote in his "Orinoco Illustrata," that "it would be as difficult to count the grains of sand on the shores of the Orinoco, as to count the immense number of tortoises which inhabit its margin and water. Were it not for the vast consumption of tortoises and their eggs, the river Orinoco, despite its great magnitude, would be unnavigable, for vessels would be impeded by the enormous multitude of tortoises."

Without presuming to question the emphatic assertion of this reverend father of the long beard and gown, never having visited the shores of the Orinoco, I will venture to assert of the galapagos that they alone could furnish man in the plains of Apure for ages with an inexhaustible supply of food, even were all other sources cut off. To convey an idea of the prodigious abundance of this species, it may suffice to say that by merely driving a herd of wild cattle or horses at full speed into any pond of these savannas, the first wave produced by the sudden splash will heave up thousands of turtles upon the beach. Another method resorted to in the Llanos for obtaining them, is by raking in the soft mud in which these chelonia habitually bury themselves the moment they are alarmed. After this mud becomes thoroughly

dried by the summer's heat, they remain under its indurated crust in a dormant state until the commencement of the rainy season. Yet even here the poor creatures are insecure, as they are not unfrequently roused from their siesta by the hunter setting fire to the dry water plants, the ornaments of these natural ponds; at such times breaking through the earth crust which environs them, they in vain endeavor to escape their tormentors, who can then pick them up at their leisure.

In addition to the foregoing, there are two other varieties of tortoises found amidst the marshes and jungles of the Llanos; they are the *morrocoy* or land tortoise, having a hard and rounded shell, and the *jicotea*, an animal which appears to form the connecting link between turtles proper and tortoises; both are of excellent flavor, more especially the former, whose liver, dressed and fried in its own gall, is undoubtedly superior to that most prized of all epicurean morsels, *foie gras*. It is very large as compared with the size of the animal, decreasing however very materially if its owner has had a long fast, which, as this reptile, like all others of the class, can and does frequently live a long time without food, has doubtless occasioned the popular error that it feeds on its own liver when long deprived of other nourishment.

During the season of great droughts, the *morrocoy* seeks the hollow trunks of trees for shelter, where it lives entirely without nourishment for several months, until, feeling the dampness produced by the first showers of spring penetrating his subterranean abode, he moves slowly out to browse upon the tender shoots

of water-plants and prairie lilies. The shell of this tortoise is so hard that nothing short of heavy blows from an axe can separate the thick plates of which it is formed, and a locomotive engine might pass over it without producing the least effect upon its unimpressible tenant. Long after the carcass has been cut up for cooking, and is in water boiling over the fire, the pieces are incessantly in motion, and it is not until the boiling has been continued many successive hours, that the meat is fit for eating.

The land tortoise does not deposit its eggs in the sand, as is the practice with its congener of the water, but drops them indiscriminately into any convenient hole, leaving the care of hatching them to the heat of the earth. The egg, which is larger than a hen's, is extremely white, spherical in form, and very hard. The male is readily distinguished from the female by a deep depression of its pectoral plate, that of the female being perfectly even with the ground.

I have been assured by reliable parties that the blood of the *morrocoy* is a specific for neuralgia, if rubbed, while still warm, upon the part affected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MATA TOTUMO.

Little was accomplished in the way of hunting during the two weeks we passed at Mata Gorda, occupying ourselves mainly in building a ranch for the establishment of a caporal and his family, with corrals attached, sufficiently spacious to accommodate a large drove. Other parts of the estate requiring immediate attention, we removed from Mata Gorda to Mata Totumo, a retired corner of the savannas, whose proximity to other cattle farms exposed it to the constant depredations of poachers. In this way vast numbers of our cattle were annually lost to us; it had accordingly become necessary to establish there also a Fundacion, or small farm with a resident caporal, who should exercise a strict surveillance and take charge of a small herd of tame cattle as a nucleus for a permanent settlement in that exposed frontier.

Hardly were we established in the new encampment, when a party of our men in scouring the savanna encountered a band of these cattle poachers, who had already collected a sufficient drove to make

them comfortable to the year's end, and were hastening home with their unlawful booty. Our people immediately gave chase, but succeeded in capturing two only of the robbers. After whipping these most unmercifully, as is customary in the Llanos for similar offences, and giving them in addition the positive assurance that, if again found within the precincts of the estate, they would fare even worse, the rascals were at length allowed to depart without further punishment.

As usual in all our prairie encampments, much time was occupied in destroying baneful weeds and reptiles. Snakes especially were so plentiful as to at times greatly endanger our barefooted community. That habit is second nature, was certainly strikingly exemplified in the present instance, for in a few days we came to notice the heretofore dreaded snakes as little as though so many harmless earthworms. Our fears, if not their cause, being at length entirely removed, we next erected a shelter from the inclemency of the weather for our abundant luggage, no small cause of anxiety, situated as we were at a long distance from the source of any fresh supplies. Afterwards we commenced raising corrals for our increasing herds. Fortunately building materials were very abundant; and the bamboo, that graceful representative of the grasses, was of the greatest utility. Its tall and pliant stems afforded all that was necessary for rafters and fence rails, serving also various other uses. To duly estimate the size attained by this giant grass of the tropics, it is necessary to understand that some stems reach the astonishing height of thirty

or even forty feet, with a corresponding thickness of six or seven inches at their base; and as these bamboos spring in immense clusters from the ground, they grow at last into an aspect which is truly beautiful. Innumerable slender leaves of a delicate sea green color, clothe in masses the tops of these huge stems, curving them downward by their weight, and giving them, especially when sporting with the soft breezes of the pampas, the appearance of waving plumes of most magnificent proportions, rising, bending, swaying in long, graceful sweeps over the tops of the surrounding trees. An elegant writer, describing this majestic Queen of the Grasses, has beautifully said, "Grace, delicacy, richness of form and color, every element of vegetable beauty, appear combined in this luxuriant dweller by the streams of the tropics. Nothing is more cheerful to the eye of the heated and wearied traveller, than the deep rocky basins formed by mountain streams when filled with water, and overshadowed by clumps of bamboo. They often lean over the stream on one side and arch the pathway on the other, excluding almost every ray of sunlight from the cool recesses below. Their delicate brittle leaves are stirred by the tiniest zephyr, and bend to the pressure of the butterfly and the bee. Sometimes clumps of bamboo stand on either side of the roads and form long vaulted passages, as if by fretted Gothic arches, with here and there branches of rich flowers and leaves hanging down like beautiful corbels. When the gale of the hurricane comes, these groves of bamboo exchange an aspect of beauty for that of grandeur. They are heaved and tossed like

the billows of the sea, and their rich foliage driven in every direction appears like surges breaking on the rocks."

No sooner was the majada in readiness, than we commenced the somewhat laborious, but at the same time pleasingly exciting business of filling it, for which purpose we called upon the neighboring cattle farms of La Yagua and Caucagua for assistance. So effectual were our efforts, that in a few days we had collected two thousand animals for the brand, most of which, having long passed the age when this operation is usually performed, gave us in consequence a great deal of trouble. Occasionally, by way of relaxation from our labors, we busied ourselves in training the boys in the manly art of *torear*, or the scarcely less dangerous one of breaking in wild horses, on which especially the hardy dwellers of the Llanos eminently pride themselves. During our sojourn at Mata Totumo, its owner became concerned in an incident highly illustrative of this peculiar pride, so universal a trait among these children of Nature and the Sun, illustrative no less of the almost entire freedom from conventional restraint which exists between master and servant in the Llanos. Our Leader had taken a strong fancy to a beautiful cream colored horse, which, although partially trained to the saddle, missed no opportunity of practising some of his old tricks, a favorite one being apparently to unseat, whenever possible, his rider. This amusement he several times indulged in at the expense of his master, and, as it chanced, always in presence of his pet cap-

oral, Sarmiento, who invariably gave *carte blanche* to his own witticisms on such occasions. To these the good-humored master replied one day by challenging him to ride the horse round the camp on a run without being thrown, a dollar to be added to his wages if successful; if the reverse, the same amount to be thereafter deducted. "Done," cried Sarmiento, extending his hand familiarly to his master; and without more words, having blindfolded the horse by means of a sliding leather strap attached to the bridle, called *tapaojos*, he placed upon him his own saddle and holsters, and the next moment was firmly seated on his back. Then, removing the bandage, he at once commenced belaboring the refractory stallion with his *chaparro*, showering such powerful blows upon his haunches, that the terrified animal rushed headlong through the camp, rearing, plunging, and tearing along the plain at a fearful pace. All in vain were the efforts of the nigh frantic steed to shake the unmerciful Centaur from his back; the poor animal had to strive against one with whom contention was ineffectual, and who finally brought him back triumphantly to the camp as submissively meek as he had previously been savage and refractory.

Shortly after our arrival in that secluded spot, came the Corporation of Mantecal, under whose jurisdiction we were, accompanied by many of the inhabitants, to pay their respects and personal regards to the former chieftain of the Llanos and late President of the Republic, tendering him at the same time the hospitalities of the town—a few straggling huts. It

was a surprise party, nevertheless we acquitted ourselves with becoming hospitality. Two fat calves were immediately slaughtered; and these, together with numbers of armadillos, galapagos, and a fine sow from the swamps near by, formed a banquet not unworthy a London board of aldermen. A hastily constructed table, its top made from laths of bamboo and tied with *bejucos* or creepers to four rough posts set in the ground, was soon raised under the trees; the broad leaves of the wild plantain formed the table cloth, while the shells of galapagos served the double purpose of plates and dishes, entirely in keeping with the rural entertainment.

Here, as well as at Mata Gorda, game was most abundant, and we could at all times count upon a ready supply with which to vary the more substantial dishes. Deer were plentiful in the surrounding woods; but I found them, after killing several, too thin at this season to be worth hunting, especially as the savannas were teeming with the finest cattle and wild hogs; the latter are in good condition at all times, and each day our men brought to camp the spoils of one or more *capones* hanging from the saddles.

The ant-bear or great ant-eater, a stout and powerful animal measuring six feet from the snout to the end of the tail, also ranged these prairies; but although his flesh is well-flavored and easily procured, it is never used for food, owing to his repulsive appearance. "He is chiefly found in the inmost recesses of the forest, and seems partial to the low and swampy parts near creeks, where the trocly-tree grows. There

he goes up and down in quest of ants, of which there is never the least scarcity, so that he soon obtains a sufficient supply of food with very little trouble. He cannot travel fast; man is superior to him in speed. Without swiftness to enable him to escape from his enemies; without teeth, the possession of which would assist him in self-defence; and without the power of burrowing in the ground, by which he might conceal himself from his pursuers, he still is capable of ranging through these wilds in perfect safety; nor does he fear the fatal pressure of the serpent's fold, or the teeth of the famished jaguar. Nature has formed his fore-legs wonderfully thick, and strong, and muscular, and armed his feet with three tremendous sharp and crooked claws. Whenever he seizes an animal with these formidable weapons, he hugs it close to his body, and keeps it there till it dies through pressure,

or through want of food. Nor does the ant-bear in the meantime suffer much from loss of aliment, as it is a well-known fact that he can go longer without food than, perhaps, any other animal, excepting the land-tortoise. His skin is of a texture that perfectly resists the bite of a dog; his hinder parts are protected by thick and shaggy hair, while his immense tail is large enough to cover his whole body." *

Numerous also were the foot-prints of the jaguar; yet, in my frequent perambulations through the forest, it was never my fortune to encounter this despot of the howling wilderness, although I one day mistook for his voice that of the *titiriji* or great horned owl of the pampas. I found him perched among the branches of a *guamo* tree, inclining his large head toward me with a scrutinizing look peculiar to those birds, as if taking mental notes of my appearance. Whenever I remained perfectly quiet he gave utterance to his unearthly hootings, the woods echoing and re-echoing the dismal sounds. The *titiriji* would seem to be possessed of some ventriloquial power, for his voice, loud and deep as it was, yet appeared to issue from a distance. The frequent effect of this peculiarity is to mislead the unaccustomed hunter, who by it is readily induced to wander on and on in unavailing search. Having contemplated at leisure this singular bird, I finally levelled my fowling-piece at him, and brought him down with a charge of buckshot which I had destined for a deer. It proved a very fine specimen, with wings as large as those of a

* Waterton's "Wanderings in South America."

good sized turkey, while two horn-like tufts of feathers rose on each side of the head, which, in addition to the large, glaring eyes, gave him a truly ferocious aspect. His food consists of all kinds of wild fowl; however, not being over scrupulous, he devours with equal relish rats, mice and snakes; while even monkeys of the smaller sort are often his prey. This owl inhabits for the most part the loneliest and gloomiest portions of the forest; but is occasionally seen solemnly watching from some convenient tree-top the various inhabitants of the farmyard.

The *guamos* were now in full bearing, their luscious beans a grateful refreshment to the heated and thirsty rambler through the woods. Monkeys and macaws are particularly fond of this bean; and on the tops of all the highest guamo-trees could be seen family reunions of these chatterers apparently discussing the merits of the crop.

Of monkeys there are two kinds in the pampas, viz. the *araguato* or howling monkey, (Simia ursina,) conspicuous in the forest from its extraordinary volume of voice, and the *machango*, (S. sajous,) a small gray monkey very common in other parts of the country. On account of its wonderful agility and vivacity, this last is much esteemed as a pet by the inhabitants, many of whom keep one or more tied to a post in the court-yard, where they enact to some extent the role of buffoon to the whole family. They are, however, very mischievous creatures, doing every possible damage in the house the moment they are at large; but are especially destructive to cacao plan-

tations and cornfields. When about to commence their depredations in these, they usually assemble in great numbers and exercise many precautions; the first step is to station several of their number as sentinels upon the highest trees, or any elevated situation overlooking the avenues leading to the plantation, whence they warn the others of approaching danger. The next proceeding is that of placing those of the females—which on account of their young are prevented from assisting in the foray—in some safe retreat. The precautions completed, they invest the cornfield in earnest, pulling down the stocks and tearing off ears of corn with astonishing expedition, chattering, laughing, and yelling all the while like a set of mischievous boys in the absence of the dominie. When they have accumulated a sufficient number of ears, they split the husks, and tying them in pairs by means of an ingenious knot peculiar to themselves, called in consequence monkey-tie, they throw them across their backs, and thus equipped hasten to hide their booty in some safe nook difficult of discovery by the neglectful majordomo, who not unfrequently conceals his own defalcations in the yield of the plantation by ascribing the deficiency to the thieving monkeys. It often happens that while these last are engaged in their depredations, they are surprised by the owner of the cornfield, who, eluding the vigilance of the scouts, suddenly appears and pours a shower of shot into their midst. Then with shrill cries of alarm the whole troop scamper off helter-skelter, tumbling, pitching or hobbling along on all fours, but never dropping a particle of their plunder. The belief ob-

tains in the Llanos, that when at length safe in their haunts, the careless sentinels are arraigned before a council of elders, who after due deliberation condemn them, after which the guilty parties are tied to a tree and soundly whipped.

No less remarkable is their ingenious method of crossing torrents and other minor streams which they often encounter in their ceaseless perambulations through the forest. As among men, all cannot swim with equal facility, so it is also with monkeys; accordingly the leaders of the troop, generally the strongest of the party, climb to the spreading branches of some tree projecting over the stream; one of them then twists his tail firmly around a branch, and letting his body hang, seizes upon the tail of the nearest comrade, who in his turn performs the same operation with the next, and so on until a sort of chain or living pendulum is formed, which in obedience to the laws of equilibrium oscillates slowly but constantly from their combined efforts to reach the opposite bank. This finally achieved, the last monkey secures himself to the most convenient tree. The others of the chain, now disengaged from the tree at the opposite side of the stream, wade through the water, each helped by his neighbor, assisted likewise by the current. Some are, however, occasionally drowned, the last one in the chain especially, which circumstance has probably given rise to the popular proverb, *el último mono siempre se ahoga*—the last monkey is sure to be drowned. Sagacious as these animals undoubtedly are, it is often very easy to entrap them. One of the simplest methods consists in cutting a

number of holes in a gourd barely large enough to admit of squeezing in the monkey's hands. The gourd thus prepared is filled with corn and secured to the trunk of a tree, then shaken violently for a time so as to attract the attention of the monkeys, and a few grains of corn scattered in the neighborhood of the trap. The gourd is in fact the dinner bell of the monkeys, which no sooner hear the well known sound, than they descend in great numbers from their aerial homes, and each in turn seizing the gourd, grasps through one of the holes a handful of corn. But in vain do they struggle to withdraw their hands without relinquishing the prize; and at this critical moment, the concealed author of their mishap suddenly makes his appearance, and tying their hands carries them off to his cottage in the woods.

More taciturn and retiring in his habits than the preceding, the *araguato*—a large reddish monkey of the ring-tail genus—exhibits none of those mischievous tricks which characterize the former, never approaching the haunts of man nor ravaging the fields of the industrious farmer. His only food consists of wild fruits, gathered as, with astonishing rapidity, he springs from branch to branch. All the limbs of this great monkey are admirably adapted to his roving habits; in these he is assisted very materially by his long prehensile tail, which acts the part of a fifth hand.

The roar of the *araguato* is so extraordinary, that persons who hear it for the first time invariably imagine it that of the jaguar. I think I may assert without fear of mistake, that it can be heard at the dis-

tance of three miles, especially in damp and cloudy weather. "The Indians pretend," observes Humboldt, "that when the *araguatos* fill the forest with their howlings, there is always one that chants as leader to the chorus. The observation is pretty accurate. During a long interval one solitary and strong voice is generally distinguished, till its place is taken by another voice of a different pitch. We may observe from time to time the same instinct of imitation among frogs, and almost all animals which live together and exert their voices in union. The missionaries further assert that when a female among the *araguatos* is on the point of bringing forth, the choir suspends its howlings till the moment of the birth of the young. I could not myself judge of the accuracy of this assertion; but I do not believe it to be entirely unfounded. I have observed that when an extraordinary incident—the moans, for instance, of a wounded *araguato*—fixed the attention of the band, the howlings were for some minutes suspended. Our guides assured us gravely, that 'to cure an asthma, it is sufficient to drink out of the bony drum of the hyoïdal bone of the *araguato*.' This animal having so extraordinary a volume of voice, it is supposed that its larynx must necessarily impart to the water poured into it the virtue of curing affections of the lungs. Such is the science of the vulgar, which sometimes resembles that of the ancients."

The *araguato* is about two feet and a half long, exclusive of his tail, which is still longer than his body, and with features more closely resembling those of man than any other species I am acquainted with.

The face of this singular monkey is nearly concealed by a sandy, bushy beard, extending below and projecting considerably beyond his chin, giving him a very dignified appearance. So striking is their resemblance to the human species, that once, after having shot one, I almost felt as though I had committed a murder. When I raised the poor creature from the ground upon which he had fallen, his large grey eyes were bathed in tears, and every feature expressed the deepest agony. Casting upon me a most eloquent look of reproach, he endeavored to push me aside; but too much enfeebled by his wound, lay down and calmly resigned himself to the scrutinizing gaze of my English companions, who discussed and disputed about the division of his still panting body—one wanting the skin for a smoking cap and the drum of the throat for the bowl of his pipe, while the other would be contented with nothing less than the whole carcass. For my own part, I only desired to get out of sight of the dying creature; and shouldering my gun, departed in a mood which determined me never again to lift my hand against these innocent wild men of the woods.

MANTECAL.

In compliance with an invitation tendered to the General and his suite by the good people of Mantecal, we started in a few days to visit their village, not far distant from our encampment. When within three miles of the place, we were welcomed by a large concourse of the inhabitants coming to escort us. Al-

most the whole population turned out, saluting our entry into the town with the firing of blunderbuses and other firearms, and further gracing it with a most discordant uproar of rickety harps, violins, and bandolas, enough to have driven frantic the "Enraged Musician" of Hogarth.

Mantecal was at one time quite a flourishing town, notwithstanding the wars which ravaged it for many successive years; but since the great epidemic of 1832, and subsequently, it has been well nigh depopulated, while the few inhabitants who were not swept away by the scourge, abandoned their homes. Thus the once busy community became almost a dismal wilderness,

> "Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
> The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake."

At the time of our visit to Mantecal but few houses remained standing, sad monuments of past prosperity. We spent three days there, and the inhabitants, hospitable in spite of their miserable condition, entertained us to the utmost of their ability. Not only did they provide the best accommodations the village afforded, but treated us in addition to a nightly fandango, in which people of all castes and conditions joined. These festivities ended, we gladly returned to our prairie home, the more especially that the important duties we had there to perform would probably delay our return to Maracay several weeks longer; also the rainy season was fast approaching and each day we had warnings of the coming tempest then brewing in the south.

We continued to hunt those savannas while there were any *orejanos* to brand, adding largely in the meantime to our stock of reserved oxen for the markets of the upper country, which had already increased to a considerable drove. We also made several excursions to the neighboring cattle farms for the purpose of separating from their herds all the *orejanos* whose mothers bore our brand. Judging from the number of calves there collected, and without taking into consideration those yearly discarded by the mothers, it was easy to perceive that the revenues of those estates were greatly increased at our cost, their original stock being vastly inferior to ours. In this manner many of the minor cattle farms enriched themselves at the expense of wealthy neighbors.

CHAPTER XIX.

MATIYURE.

HAVING by this time completed our arrangements at Mata Totumo, we broke up our camp on the 15th of March and departed for Los Laureles, the ancient site of another cattle farm, now quite deserted, on the banks of the river Matiyure.

We found the house in ruins, and only a few remaining posts marking the boundary of the former corrals. The first duty, therefore, was that of repairing the fences, an operation which necessitated several days' hard labor. Meanwhile I found much enjoyment in exploring the woody banks of the river, the wildness of whose aspect had for me a peculiar charm. They were my daily resort, where, encompassed by the glorious solitude, I essayed to picture for others those lovely scenes which still perfume the shrine of memory in all their dewy freshness. To one who loves "the cool sequestered haunts of Nature," no spot could be more charming, nothing more inspiring than to recline under the venerable shade of some wide-branched guamo uplooking to the many-

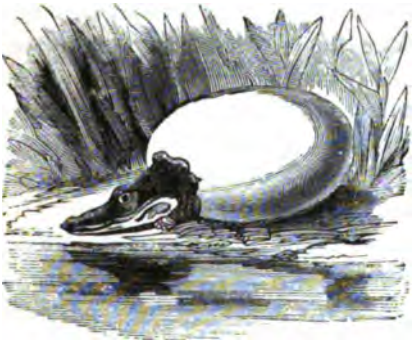
tinted clouds as they sweep in solemn majesty beneath the blue veil of heaven, and seem to melt into the tree tops in the distance—trees whose gigantic height and size, wall with magnificent vegetation the steep banks rising on either side of the river, mirrored in its tranquil surface. The harsh scream of the heron, or the ominous hootings of the tiger-owl, alone wake the echoes where else

> "All things are calm, and fair, and passive—Earth
> Looks as if lulled upon an angel's lap
> Into a breathless, dewy sleep."

Yet is this beautiful river celebrated for the number and size of its crocodiles. As I sat sketching on the banks, I could perceive them gliding slowly under the still waters, the upper part of the head alone visible, and seeming to watch me with an evil eye. The beach being strewn with their egg shells, I concluded this to be a favorite resort with them during the breeding season. The female lays about eighty eggs in a hole which she digs in the sand, leaving to the hot sun the care of hatching them. These eggs, twice as large as those of the turkey, are considered a great delicacy by the Indians and jaguars, who frequently purloin them before they are hatched.

The *caricari* is another great enemy of young crocodiles, attacking them as they come out of the shell. After they betake themselves to the water, the older ones, prompted no doubt by motives of family pride to keep them within their own circle, swallow these tender members, thus preventing all other intimacies. Notwithstanding this admirable provision of Divine

Wisdom, and a constant war maintained by man and beast against them, they are so numerous in some charcos of the river that, if stationary, their bodies



would completely bridge its surface from bank to bank.

Despite their great voracity, the mother exhibits some degree of tenderness toward her offspring. Possessed, in this case, of an instinct almost infallible, she returns at a period when incubation is completed, and assists her young in extricating themselves from the shell. Unlike the eggs of birds, crocodiles' eggs are soft and pliable as those of the turtle, yielding, when handled, to the pressure of the fingers, yet so tough that it is difficult to break them, and in appearance resembling white parchment. At the very moment of liberation, the young crocodiles display their savage nature in a wonderful degree, biting at every object within reach; also the same vicious propensity is exhibited by those extricated even before the completion of incubation. I was once greatly amused in watching a struggle between two caricaris

and one of these youngsters not larger than a good-sized lizard. Each time the birds made a dash at him, this little saurian, grunting savagely, darted forward with wide-open jaws, looking for all the world like a young dragon. During ten minutes the struggle continued without decided advantage on either side, when one of the assailants, changing his tactics, suddenly seized the crocodile by the neck with his sharp claws and soared triumphantly with him into high air. There loosing his hold, the bird followed his descent with wonderful rapidity, prepared, when he reached the ground, to repeat the blow; but already half stunned, the victim soon yielded to superior cunning.

When the savannas are overflowed by the swollen rivers, these carnivorous and malicious reptiles spread themselves over the face of the country, committing great havoc among young animals. So destructive had they proved to the calves and foals on this estate, that the owner on one occasion offered a reward of half a dollar a head for every crocodile killed upon his lands, it being sufficient for the claimant to produce, in evidence of success, the two great tusks of the upper jaws. The result of this *ukase* was, that before the expiration of a month, more than four hundred crocodiles had been destroyed; yet no sensible diminution was observable, neither did the persevering dragonade against them quench in the least their boldness. This expedient proving useless, they had been suffered to remain unmolested until our arrival at Los Laureles, when we determined to exterminate those at least which infested that pass of the river

where we performed our daily ablutions and watered the horses. Accordingly, one day a party of us, well provided with every necessary, started for a bend of the river where the water appeared to be very still and deep. None of the usual angling implements were required in this sport; we used only a strong lazo and a hoop about three feet in diameter made from a light vine common on the banks of these rivers. Around this hoop the fresh lungs of a bullock, cut into thin strips, were twisted and securely fastened. The running noose of the lazo was then laid over the bait and tied there with tendrils from the same vine. All being ready, this simple decoy was launched into the middle of the stream, we retaining on shore the other end of the lazo. Aroused by the splash, two large crocodiles soon appeared and rushed for the bait with open jaws. The successful one, in his eagerness to escape with his prize, burst the slender vines that secured the noose to the hoop, which last projected beyond his snout, and the noose on its recoil sliding over, firmly lazoed his upper jaw. With shouts of exultation we hastened to the assistance of the man who held the lazo, seeing him unable to cope with the monster, more than a match for half a dozen men. By our united efforts we finally succeeded in dragging him to within a few feet of the embankment, when, catching sight of our earnest faces watching him over the cliff, he tossed up his head with such sudden violence as to pull the thong through our hands to its full length, and retreated in triumph to the middle of the stream. The tough hide, however, from which the thong was twisted,

proved equal to the emergency, and with one more strenuous effort we succeeded in landing him upon the beach, while

"Le flot qui l'apporta, recule épouvanté."

Some of us who never before had so near a view of these vicious creatures, were astonished at its size and strength, and our Esculapius, assuming an appearance of bravery, approached among the first to contemplate the vanquished foe, but evidently quaking with apprehension of the huge tusks before him. His terror at length proving stronger than the dread of his companions' gibes, he seized the lazo, tugging with such desperate energy to close the fearful chasm that the thong slipped from his hands, he lost his balance, and the next moment found himself lying almost within reach of the still open jaws. From these, notwithstanding a considerable corporeal impediment, he escaped by springing with the agility of a cat up the embankment, where he remained, perhaps to ascertain whether the poet's statement that "distance lends enchantment to the view," was correct by the crocodile case before him. At length the object of his regards almost ceased struggling, sure sign that his strength was failing; then with one more pull we hauled him partially out of water, but no power could force him entirely therefrom, as each time on reaching the bank he braced his fore feet with unconquerable strength against it, so forcing himself back into the stream. In this predicament we had no other resource than to despatch him, and two or three sharp blows of a hatchet administered by the roguish

Roseliano, severed the upper jaw, with its beautiful row of teeth, from the head, a surgical operation performed under the supervision of our eminent Esculapius. The patient expired—no doubt to the Doctor's relief—not on his hands, and the "subject" was abandoned to the myriads of caribes which, although their teeth could produce little impression upon his tough cuirass, feasted with avidity on his blood so long as it flowed from his mutilated head.

We prepared a large supply of bait in like manner to the former, all of which was seized by the hungry crocodiles with the same fatal results to them. In the short space of three hours we succeeded in killing six large ones, and could no doubt have destroyed a greater number, had not the lazo been gnawed through by caribes, that pest of all rivers in this region.

Our men secured a large supply of fat from the intestinal membrane of the crocodiles: a sovereign remedy for bruises and cutaneous diseases among horses. By exposing this fat to the sun, in horns slightly punctured at the end, a fine oil equal to that of the whale, is obtained by percolation and collected in basins placed under the horns.

Selecting the jaws of the dead crocodiles containing the finest tusks, we distributed the latter among our friends for tinder boxes and amulets. It is universally believed throughout the Llanos that the tusks, when worn next the flesh of man or beast, will preserve the wearer from the poison of snakes, especially if obtained on Good Friday. For this reason the smaller ones, set in gold or silver, are worn sus-

pended from the rosaries which form one of the principal ornaments of the people in those parts. It is further believed that rings made of the same material will apprise the wearer, of poison mixed in any draught by causing an instantaneous effervescence of the liquid. The supposed efficacy of these potential talismans was once peculiarly tested, in our own camp.

Among the few luxuries carried by our commissariat into the Llanos was a basket of champagne, which was reserved for state occasions. One afternoon, while almost every person was enjoying his siesta, the temptation seized one of our men to search for aguardiente among the *petacas*. His good fortune discovered to him our little treasure of champagne, and grabbing a bottle he at once commenced cutting with his dagger the wires that secured the cork. Up this flew at last with a loud report, which broke the dead silence of the camp and started to their feet more than one drowsy slumberer.

Our thief, seeing the profuse effervescence gushing out with great force, endeavored at first to arrest it by clapping his hands over the mouth of the bottle; but suddenly recollecting that he had on one of those mysterious tusk-rings, the suspicion flashed to his mind of poison intended for *el amo*, the master; and when in addition to this the bewildered knave perceived that apparently the more he endeavored to confine the liquid, so much more it frothed and bubbled, he was overpowered with terror, shrieking out in an ecstasy of horror, "Ave Maria Purisima!

Help! Help! *cristianos;* this aguardiente must be poisoned, or else the devil is in it."

On hearing these cries, every one sprang from his hammock, imagining the camp attacked by a band of *malhechores*, and the would-be thief was thus caught in the very act.

As he was, however, out of his wits with fright, he escaped with only a mild reprimand, the more especially that we enjoyed several hearty laughs at his expense. Futile were our efforts at convincing the frightened fellow that champagne was very good drink; he evidently distrusted all our assertions. Some was then poured out and drank, and the bottle passed round; but when it came to his turn, he persistently refused to touch it. On being asked whether his surprise and repugnance arose from seeing the liquid rushing out of the bottle, his reply was, "Oh, no, *Señores;* I am not surprised to see it coming out, but how the devil did it get in?"

With the intention of finishing a sketch of one of the crocodiles, I next day revisited the battle field, and to my surprise discovered the absence of one of the dead bodies; but presently perceived the mailed carcass floating at some distance on the water. I was for some time at a loss to discover what had occasioned his change of position, and I finally concluded that its comrades must have given him honorable interment in the deep. Desiring to ascertain, if possible, the facts of the case, I determined to conceal myself near by and keep close watch. I had been in hiding only a few moments when at least half a

dozen crocodiles approached the deceased, not, as I had imagined, to mourn his loss, but to feast upon the many fish in their turn gorging themselves upon the body. Then, almost to my horror, I beheld these monster insatiates rend in pieces and devour the melancholy remains of the dear defunct with grunts of revolting satisfaction. Nor did I perceive in this case any of those "crocodile tears" with which travellers tell us it is their hypocritical habit to bedew the head of a human victim. It is said that when they have devoured a man, finding themselves unable to swallow his head, they convey it to some secluded spot on the river banks, there to weep over and bewail their inability with cries which make night hideous.

The size and appearance of crocodiles must be sometimes most extraordinary, if we may credit our adventurous friend B., who boasted so intimate an acquaintance with their habits, that one could easily imagine such familiarity might breed contempt. Judge, O reader, if I speak not truly.

He related that one day, having labored successfully until noon in his piscatory pursuit, overcome by fatigue and the intense heat of a tropical sun, he turned his longing eyes toward shore in search of some friendly shelter; but perceiving that, between him and the only copse of trees which relieved the glaring scene, there stretched a dreary waste of burning sand, he had not courage to traverse, even to reach so tempting a goal—he sought a refuge more accessible. This to his great joy he just then discovered in the form of what appeared to be the wreck of an old canoe thrown on its side near the water's edge. Here

was a cool retreat wherein to enjoy his siesta; so hastening toward it, his satisfaction was complete on finding it sufficiently capacious to admit of slinging to the protruding ribs his *chinchorro*, or grass hammock, which, with his guitar and gourd of aguardiente, were his inseparable companions. Refreshing himself with a good pull at the gourd, and stretching himself in his hammock, he soon slept the profound sleep of the weary. He awoke to find himself enveloped in a darkness which he might have supposed that of midnight, but that it was unrelieved by moon or friendly star. Completely bewildered, he sought a clew to this dark mystery by moving forward with cautious steps and extended hands, uncertain into what horror his next movement might betray him, when his surprised attention was attracted, first to the spongy nature of the ground, then to the clammy yet warm and sticky walls that on all sides encountered his extended fingers. The discovery of these facts was accompanied by the very unpleasant conviction that he had mistaken the open jaws of some sleeping crocodile for an old bongo. However, with his recovery from the first shock of surprise returned the stoicism so characteristic of his race, which was the more entirely reinstated by finding his well-filled gourd with his beloved guitar lying near. Notwithstanding, however, a reviving draught from the former, he soon became conscious of a void in his internal economy, which he at once determined to fill at Mr. Crocodile's expense; thereupon drawing his knife, he without the least compunction made a meal from the tenderest morsels within reach. And so

CROCODILE BASKING IN THE SUN.

eating, drinking, sleeping and tuning his diminutive guitar to the cheering strains of some lively ballad of the Llanos, he remained for days, he knew not how many, an uncomplaining prisoner within those slimy walls. At length, while mournfully draining the last remaining drop within his faithful gourd, his dungeon walls were suddenly made visible to him by a faint ray of light which penetrated his very soul with the desire once more to behold its source. Snatching at the dear companions of his imprisonment, without another moment's delay he rushed for the opening that admitted the life-giving ray, and discovered to his delighted surprise that his jailer, having deserted the water for a siesta upon the sands—which he recollected was the occasional habit of these monsters—had left wide-open his prison doors. These he lost no time in passing, seizing with firm hand as he flew, his *chinchorro*, still suspended from the crocodile's tusks he had so almost fatally mistaken for the ribs of an old canoe.

The precise duration of his captivity, B., with a praiseworthy fear of exaggeration, never ventured even to surmise to us, merely stating the fact that when he lay down for his siesta the moon was in full dress, and when freed from his hideous jail, Her Majesty had in her turn retired for a nap.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CIMARRONERA.

We had been apprised that between a great bend of the river Matiyure—forming the southern boundary of our savannas—and an extensive flat overgrown with thorny bushes, there existed what the Llaneros call a *cimarronera*, or great hiding place for cattle, which, owing to the impenetrable nature of the jungle, had from time immemorial baffled the efforts of every majordomo who had hunted these savannas. Further we had ascertained that the cattle were there as numerous as a colony of ants; but so savage and shy, as to never venture from their wild sanctuary. Thither our efforts were to be directed, not only on account of the good harvest in store, but also for the purpose of breaking up, if possible, that den of runaways which, if left unmolested, might in time become a serious obstacle in the way of reducing those wild herds to at least a partial submission.

The corrals, which I trust the patient reader has not forgotten we were in process of building, being now ready, we commenced preparations for a descent

upon the fierce hordes of that neglected section. Messengers were therefore despatched to the people of Caucagua, an adjacent cattle farm, apprising them of our intention, and with the dawn of day more than an hundred hunters were assembled on the spot. Among them were some of the best *enlazadores* that the country could produce, all of whom, like the valiant Pentapolin—chosen model of the hero of La Mancha—had his right arm bared to the shoulder that the wide sleeve of the Llanero shirt might not interfere with the management of the lazo.

As soon as the sun was high enough to light us through the bushes, a detachment of hunters penetrated the bristling maze of thorny acacias, and succeeded in driving out into the open savannas so large a herd of cattle that it soon swelled to a considerable *rodeo*. No sooner, however, did they discover the presence of the hunters, than becoming frantic they rushed from side to side like a band of furies, and, heedless of the shouts and goads of the horsemen, broke at length through the ring of even these experienced hunters, scattering again in all directions. In vain did the fearless pursuers throw themselves between the wild mass and the jungle; so rapid and entire was the dispersion that the plain which but now swarmed with the driven, bellowing, maddened creatures, was cleared as if by magic, leaving the disappointed hunters in sole possession. Only here and there a faint cloud of dust in the distance betrayed the course that some of the fugitives had taken. The men, enraged at this unexpected discomfiture, could not be restrained from again entering the tangled

labyrinth and dragging thence by sheer force a number of the refractory brutes. After deliberation, it was decided that several of the hunters should scour the plain in search of the runaways, while the larger number rushed again fearlessly into the jungle. These at last succeeded in securing several fierce bulls, each of which was treated *secundum artem*, depriving them of the chance of doing much mischief in future; for no sooner were they down, than the knife and the saw were busy with their horns, ears, &c. But the business was not accomplished without the usual average of casualties in these contests, and on that occasion one of our best hands was greatly imperilled. A ferocious bull was undergoing the usual precautionary, though severe measures, for his subjugation, when one of the men standing near, accidentally became entangled in the coils of the lazo at a moment when the bull, infuriated, escaped from those who held him. The poor fellow, although thrown violently to the ground and severely stunned, almost miraculously escaped further injury. The daring Sarmiento, one of those who witnessed the transaction, enraged at sight of his helpless companion, sprang from his horse, seized the sheep-skin which covered the saddle, and holding it before himself, fearlessly advanced sword in hand to meet the bull, which, not comprehending the challenge, stood panting and trembling with rage before his bold adversary. The matador perceiving this, approached him more closely and shook the sheep-skin in the animal's face; then, firm as a rock, he stood and dauntlessly awaited the coming struggle; it was

enough; with head lowered to the ground, and lashing himself furiously with his powerful tail, the bull rushed upon his antagonist with a terrific roar, causing every heart to tremble for the safety of the bold matador. Then we heard a heavy fall, a deep groan; we saw only a cloud of dust that concealed the scene; but we knew the Llanero had conquered. Triumphant shouts of approbation filled the air, whilst I knew not whether most to applaud the fearless grace with which the man had stood his ground before this, the most powerful of all infuriate creatures, or the dexterous celerity that had found, and with one fatal blow penetrated, the narrow passage through the vertebræ into the spinal marrow. But the scene in that remote corner of the earth recalled forcibly to my mind the spirited lines in which the author of Childe Harold thus depicts one of like nature in the midst of refined Europe:

"Foiled, bleeding, breathless, furious to the last,
Full in the centre stands the bull at bay
Mid wounds and clinging darts and lances brast,
And foes disabled in the brutal fray:
And now the matadors around him play,
Shake the red cloak, and poise the ready brand:
Once more through all he bursts his thundering way—
Vain rage! the mantle quits the conynge hand,
Wraps his fierce eye—'tis past—he sinks upon the sand!"

Those who had galloped off in search of the scattered herd finally returned, bringing a large addition to the stock, and we were driving them to the *paradero*, when our Leader's horse, a fiery charger of the

Goagiro breed,* little accustomed to the broken ground of the pampas, lost his footing and fell with him while endeavoring to clear an extensive *terronero*. Fortunately his rider received no injury; but loosing hold of the bridle in his fall, the horse was soon careering over the plain, and would inevitably have made good his escape, had not some vaqueros hunting in that direction encountered and captured him after a long race. Accidents of the kind are very common in the Llanos, and often in consequence many persons are killed or otherwise injured. The least evil to which the ousted rider may be subjected, is that of being left alone, perhaps with a dislocated limb, on an extensive plain, where the unfortunate may perish from hunger or exposure before assistance chances to reach him. Our friend B., who once found himself similarly circumstanced, related to us on this occasion the adventure, which he swore by all the saints in the calendar had actually occurred to him. Notwithstanding such exalted referees, a few grains of doubt still disturbed our belief.

"He was once," he said, "engaged in hunting with a party of vaqueros on the extensive savannas of Merecure, which form the great cañon or pampa between the rivers Cunaviche and Arauca. Having started in the morning with a full complement of men, there was no difficulty in forming the *rodeo;* but, as in our own case, all their manœuvres proved ineffectual in keeping together so great a number of untamed brutes, which finally broke through the

* Raised by a warlike tribe of Indians inhabiting the peninsula of La Goagira, on the Gulf of Maracaibo.

ranks as easily as might a herd of wild hogs through a field of reeds, and vanished in the distance. So great was the cloud of dust they raised, that when it cleared, B., whose horse during the confusion had stumbled in the hole of a prairie-owl, thrown, and then deserted him, found himself solus in the midst of the wide pampa, and so bewildered and confused by the general stampede, that he was totally unable to discover the least clew by which to guide his steps over those trackless wilds. Overcome with the fatigue of his useless search, he threw himself upon the ground, finally quite disheartened by the recollection that he had no lazo by which he would have been enabled at any time to secure sufficient animal food for his subsistence. Two whole days he thus passed hopelessly wandering and in search of food, when, upon the third, kind Providence, compassionating his sufferings, placed in his way a fat calf, which he succeeded in capturing after a short chase. Having slaughtered it, he roasted the whole at once lest it might spoil, then ravenously devoured the welcome repast. This supply lasted several days, when again finding himself minus food, he determined to put in practice a stratagem that he had devised whereby to secure for himself in future an unfailing supply of wholesome nourishment. He had observed the mother of the calf, apparently in search of her offspring, lingering in the neighborhood, moaning and bellowing in a most piteous manner. Availing himself of the first eligible opportunity, he approached her on all fours, entirely covered with the skin of her own calf, and forthwith commenced drawing suste-

nance from the maternal fount; this he accomplished with so much natural ease and grace, that the tender mother, after a few incredulous sniffs, felt convinced at last of his being a perfect calf, and accepting him for her own, bestowed upon him a good licking. Thus graciously encouraged, and each day more delighted with the unrestrained freedom of his new life, time rolled on and a year elapsed without his ever regretting the loss of home or friends; while so powerful was the effect of this novel mode of existence upon his person, that it had materially altered his whole appearance, and as the calf skin seemed to have actually adhered to his own, so he found himself rapidly assimilating, as well in tastes as habits, to that interesting quadruped.

About this period the majordomo undertook another hunt on these plains, where he quickly succeeded in collecting a large number of cattle; but although they were all, as usual, extremely difficult to manage, still there was one of the number, a young bull with a fine pair of horns twelve inches long, more refractory and troublesome than any of the others, which fact—as B. was the bull—was owing probably to his educated instincts, they enabling him to devise a variety of expedients for the discomfiture of his pursuers. However he was at length obliged to yield to superior numbers, and the unerring lazo finally brought him struggling to the ground, when in an instant one of his captors, an athletic sambo, had drawn his knife and commenced sharpening it upon the horns of this novel minotaurus, preparatory to performing upon him the usual necessary oper-

ations. But what language can do justice to the astonishment of all beholders, when the apparent bull, casting aside his hairy disguise, sprang erect from the ground, exclaiming as he did so: "Stop, *amigos!* can you have forgotten your old comrade B., who was lost a year ago in this *cimarronera?*"

So perilous an adventure having convinced him of the risks attending a savage life, his companions had no difficulty in persuading him to return home with them, and thereafter found him of immense assistance in their expeditions, as, being perfectly familiar with the haunts and habits of the cattle in that cover, he could lead the vaqueros, when required, with the sagacity of a pointer.

This story, which B. related with the most admirable ingenuousness of manner, recalled to his recollection a wonderful discovery upon which he had chanced, while journeying on a pressing errand to Arauca.

He had been riding hard all day across the plains, until at length, overtaken by night, he was constrained to encamp on the spot. Grass and water for his horse—a fine trotter—being abundant and at hand, he took no precaution to prevent his straying, other than that of fastening the animal's feet on the right side with a *manea*, a strap with looped nooses at both ends. In spite of this the horse wandered from him during the night, a mishap which compelled poor B. to finish the remainder of the journey on foot, besides being obliged to carry the ponderous saddle upon his head.

Having accomplished his errand at Arauca, and after an absence of several weeks, he was returning

home by another route, riding a hired animal, when to his great joy, on the way he found his steed in fine condition, and his feet still secured by the strap. The horse he was riding being already tired, he removed the saddle to the back of his own steed, and immediately mounted him. But to his overpowering astonishment, he discovered, on resuming the journey, that the gait of his horse had undergone an extraordinary change, trotting as formerly on the side that had remained free from the strap, but ambling on the one which had been so long confined by it. His wife possessing an ambler, he sold it immediately he reached home, it being thereafter a useless expense, as, whenever in the future he and his better half wished to ride at the same time, all that he had to do was to place her on the ambling side, and then seating himself on the other they trotted and ambled away to their hearts' content.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOS BORALES.

AWARE of the importance of a plentiful supply of water for the cattle during the season of drought, we resolved to build a large reservoir in the heart of the savannas before leaving the pampas, and with this object now turned our steps toward the lagoon of Los Borales—so named in honor of a species of water lily very abundant on its borders—which, although quite a lake during the rainy season, often lost its waters by evaporation and other causes when most needed. This required a dam to be raised across one of the many creeks traversing these plains in all directions, to arrest the flow when the floods begin ebbing, thus leaving an artificial reservoir where previously only an extensive bog existed. We installed ourselves within the shelter of a solitary grove, and immediately commenced raising an embankment to several feet above the level of the plain, taking the earth for the purpose from the bed of a creek connecting with the lagoon. Digging to the depth of twelve feet, we came upon a tree with trunk and branches in perfect

preservation, which, although it had evidently been thus entombed for ages, a breath of air had power to crumble into dust. As from the time of our arrival it had rained unceasingly, the water rapidly accumulated in the now completed reservoir, though our satisfaction received something of a damper from the fact that the fires were thereby constantly extinguished, until we bethought ourselves of erecting over them a covering of green boughs about three feet from the ground. Upon this we laid large pieces of meat, which, covered with palm leaves, were speedily cooked by the fire beneath.

In that retired and solitary grove, seated on a pack-saddle, and surrounded by lazos, bridles, and other emblems of our peaceful occupation, I wrote under the dictation of my father, his emphatic refusal to accept the Presidency of the Republic for a third time. Little did we then dream that this spontaneous act of political abnegation would be hailed with exultation by his enemies, in the hope of working, as it did for a time, his ruin as well as that of the Republic; and that the same plains where occurred this disinterested proof of patriotism, should shortly afterward witness a scene of bloodshed and persecution to him who, not long before, had been the acknowledged guardian of his country's liberties.

Thunder storms were now of frequent occurrence. One night we were awakened by a fearful clap from the approaching tempest. The prospect was not inviting. Sheltered in our hammocks only by our *toldos*, and raising among us all but a very small umbrella of philosophy, we awaited the coming storm.

In a moment it was upon us with a raging wind that threatened to overthrow and crush us beneath the falling branches of the trees. Then from the heavens descended so continuous a sheet of commingled fire and flood, that these at last appeared to become a part of the atmosphere we breathed. Terrified by this fearful uproar, our *madrina* of supernumerary horses, which, fearing the snakes, we had quartered in the bed of a dried-up lagoon, dashed madly across the plain, in spite of the combined efforts of their keepers. But no sooner had these refractory animals abandoned the secure pastures for the high grounds, than, attacked by snakes, three of them paid with their lives their insubordination, and one of these unfortunates was afterward brought staggering into the camp, groaning piteously. Unable in the darkness to discover the cause of his sufferings, a light was speedily procured by igniting a rag rolled in fat, when a most revolting spectacle presented itself; the poor beast, so covered with blood that he appeared literally to have been plunged into a bath of gore, had evidently been bitten by a snake, possibly the same which in killing the others had probably nearly exhausted its poison upon them, so that what remained of the venom had not power to produce immediate death, but effected a complete diapedesis or transudation of the blood. A *curandero* present undertook to restore the poor animal by means of the famous *oracion*, but on this occasion his skill was vain—the horse in a short time expiring, apparently in great agony. The groans of the dying animal, the thundering of the others along the waste, the shouts

and curses of their pursuers, who in the darkness were in danger of being trampled under the feet of more than three hundred frightened animals, mingled with the appalling fury of the elements, until it seemed as though earth and heaven were struggling for the mastery. This fearful scene oh, my unhappy country! shadowed forth but too faithfully thy dark night of despotism; the anarchy, contentions, and wretchedness of thy children; thy ravaged borders, where the "Wise and Good" had formerly scattered plenty over the smiling land, and portrays now to me as faithfully the night when I, with a handful of brave youths from Maracaibo, was surprised upon the borders of its lake by the myrmidons of the tyrant Monagas, and carried prisoners to the capital while endeavoring to save the remnant of constitutional liberty in the republic.

Our men, finding it impossible during the darkness to trace the horses—among them all of those used for the saddle—were obliged to postpone their search until sunrise. At length, as if wearied with its wild orgies, this tumultuous night passed away, and the morning star appeared leading the timid dawn. The earth, so late the dark abode of chaos, now in bloom and beauty, seemed the favored daughter of the spheres, sparkling in liquid gems, and radiant in the gorgeous splendor of tropical spring, while myriads of white lilies, far as eye could reach, mantled the plain, flooding with perfume the pure morning air. Countless flocks of waterfowl, from the tiny *güiriri* to the soldier-like crane of the pampas, crowded the

miniature lakes, which the late storm had left in every hollow of the ground, and made the air resound with their harsh and varied notes. Conspicuous among these last were the several species of *garzas*—herons—those "Ladies of the waters, delicate in form, beautiful in plumage, and graceful in their movements," whose slender, arching necks, curving here and there above and through the sprouting grass, reminded one of the deadly snakes lurking about the plain. There, too, the *carrao*, a bird less prepossessing in appearance, but endowed with keen perception of a coming change of weather, announced by loud cries, from which it derives its name, the near approach of rain with singular precision. Clouds of fluttering *gaviotas* or scissor-beaks (Rhynchops) skimmed the water in wild, irregular flight, ploughing up the smaller fish with their scissor-like beaks, and vexing the ear with harsh and piercing cries. On all sides bellowing herds of cattle and troops of emaciated deer wandered, panting as they sought for water and fresh food; while, rescued from the torpor into which the protracted summer drought had plunged them, the drowsy crocodiles and sluggish tortoises moved slowly over the plain in search of the reviving element.

It was no easy task to keep the fires burning after the deluging showers of the previous night, in consequence of which we were threatened for a while with starvation in the midst of plenty, as not only had our temporary kitchen been destroyed, but every log of wood was drenched with water; so were also our scanty garments and ponchos, most of them being

likewise in a few hours covered with the larvæ of myriads of flies which infested our camp. These *petites misères* were, however, forgotten for the moment in the all-absorbing topic of the whereabouts of our runaway horses. Happily the Llaneros, accustomed from their infancy to observe the instincts of the animals surrounding them, possess a sort of intuitive knowledge—with them it might be called a science—of their movements and impulses.

In following the trail of stray animals amidst thousands intercepting each other in every direction, it is of course necessary to determine the right one in order to prosecute the search with some degree of success. The long experience and sagacity of our sturdy majordomo, whose word was considered infallible in such matters, were of incalculable advantage on this occasion. Calmly seated on his hammock, his weather-beaten countenance turned toward the far horizon, he assembled around him the wearied watchmen of the missing drove, still drenched by the late tempest; and directing each squad as to the probable course followed by the separate groups of horses, he ordered them to disperse over the plain in pursuit of their uncertain errand. As the subsequent results proved, on the afternoon of the following day, it was executed with gratifying punctuality; and here I may be permitted to utter a passing word of praise in behalf of these hardy cavaliers of the desert plains, upon whose courage and sagacity often depends, not only the success of such expeditions, but sometimes even the fate of a whole army, whose progress would be seriously endangered without a com-

petent body of cavalry to procure the necessary supply of beef. Scantily provided with raiment, poorly paid, and the simple fare of the Llanos for rations, they are at the post of duty at all hours, in the hot sunshine of day, or "in thunder, in lightning, and in rain" by night, always cheerful and happy, providing they have with them their inharmonious guitar and plenty of tobacco with which to satisfy their appetite for stimulus of some sort. Among the various duties of their vocation, one of the hardest to which they are subjected is that of keeping a constant watch over the cattle at night to prevent their dispersion, as they are compelled to remain for hours on horseback and "wide awake." In order to accustom the cattle to the voice of their nocturnal guardians, a constant chant in a peculiarly plaintive strain, in which cattle seem rather to delight, is kept up until morning, when only a few horsemen are necessary to retain them within the grazing ground. Should the unruly herd, despite their vigilance, take alarm, as is often the case, or evince any symptoms of uneasiness, the first care of the men is to close in, in circle, and if this prove unavailing, they place themselves at the head of the stampede, in order to check, if possible, the progress of the affrighted multitude; but woe to the unfortunate watchman whose horse, missing his footing, throws his rider, for he will be trampled to death in an instant!

One afternoon we were apprised by a special messenger from El Frio, that a tall, red-faced Englishman had arrived from the Orinoco, bringing any quantity

of fire-arms, ammunition, and—what appeared most extraordinary to our informant—a genuine negro servant who could speak English. As no written communication had been despatched along with the bearer of this unexpected piece of intelligence, we had not an idea of who this British Nimrod might be. We, however, hastened to welcome the stranger, and for the purpose left Los Borales next morning for head-quarters. On arriving, we were most agreeably surprised at meeting no less a personage than Lord James Butler, now, as I understand, Earl of Ormond. We then recollected that the previous year, when his lordship had honored us with a visit at our home in the valleys of Aragua, he had promised that should we carry out our projected expedition to the pampas, he would meet us there. Accordingly, in expectation of this, he had quitted Barbadoes—where he was stationed with his regiment—in his yacht for the river Orinoco. There he left it and prosecuted the remainder of the voyage in a clumsy bongo, up the Apure, arriving at San Fernando nearly a month after quitting Ciudad Bolivar. At the former place he was advised to proceed to Achaguas, where he would most likely hear of our whereabouts. Obtaining there the requisite information, he immediately set out for our cattle farm, distant about fifteen leagues; but instead of providing him with a guide across the trackless waste, he was merely furnished with a refractory mule, which they assured him would take him to the next cattle farm, whence he would be directed onward. He had not proceeded far on his solitary way, when the vicious animal, taking fright

at a prairie-owl just as night was approaching, suddenly whirled round, and my lord, despite his long legs and English horsemanship, lost his balance, was dismounted, and, what was worse, left to shift for himself in the midst of a wide plain; the mule, finding, perhaps, the load rather too much for him, scampering off without even a parting compliment. Nor was his sable squire at hand to render him the requisite assistance, as he had been left behind in charge of the numberless accoutrements for the chase. Fortunately a peon accidentally encountered the mule on his way home, and knowing the tricks of the animal, secured him, and brought him back to the discomfited traveller.

His lordship related this adventure with much humor, and on our expressing regret that he had met with so disagreeable a *contretemps*, he coolly replied that he scarcely considered it in that light, and rather regretted its speedy termination as having, possibly, deprived him of some curious experiences.

Although the best room in the house had been prepared for his accommodation, we observed with surprise that when night came, he insisted upon having his hammock slung in the open air. This, we afterward discovered, was in consequence of his great horror for the *murcielagos* clinging in clusters to the thatch-roof of the house; and I must confess also that the guest-chamber in our Manor of the Pampas had few attractions, and could offer none of the allurements of the *dulce domo* to his lordship of Kilkenny Castle. Wines or delicacies of any kind we had none; but as we were well aware that the hospitable

Englishman always offers some choicer beverage than water to his guests, we caused an old corozo-palm tree standing in front of the house to be cut down, and from it we procured every afternoon a plentiful supply of palm-wine. To obtain this, a trough is scooped out in the upper part of the stem among the footstalks of the leaves; the opening is then covered with the square piece of bark just cut out, and the wine or sap allowed to accumulate in the trough during the night. A few hours are sufficient to produce a pleasant vinous fermentation with a sweetish taste and a flavor similar to that of Malaga wine; but if left to ferment for a longer period, it acquires decidedly intoxicating properties.

Although our sports were nearly over at this time, we endeavored to entertain our distinguished visitor as well as circumstances would permit. We escorted him several times to the savannas in search of game, and even got up a *rodeo* and branding frolic for his special amusement, with both of which he appeared highly delighted. During the excitement of the *rodeo* he had another adventure, similar to that I have already related as having occurred to my friend, Mr. Thomas, with a wild bull, and which came very near proving more disastrous than his lordship's previous one with the refractory mule. We had just surrounded a large herd of cattle, when, like the artist, inspired by the excitement of the chase and its accompanying scenes, Lord James seized his sketch-book and commenced to delineate them. He had not been long thus occupied, when a bull, attracted perhaps by the commanding attitude of the draughts-

man, broke through the ring, and made at him with fury in his eyes. Unconscious of danger, he continued his occupation with as much composure as if at a stag-hunt in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It was too late to render him assistance, and we watched the issue with breathless anxiety; but the bull, apparently awed by the immovable attitude of the rider and his fearless composure, contented himself with making a tremendous demonstration at the breast of the horse without either touching him or his rider, and then, turning tail, vanished in the distance. It was highly amusing to hear his lordship inquire the meaning of all that flourish of trumpets, when a witty Llanero, standing near, replied to him that it was evidently intended as a salutation from the wild multitude to the honored guest.

Startled by the noise and rush of so many animals over the plain, the foxes—in the pursuit of which Englishmen are so lavish of trouble and expense—could be seen running to and fro, endeavoring to escape; no sooner did the noble son of Albion discover that this favorite game was also to be found in the pampas, than he abandoned the exciting hunt of the wild cattle for the first fox that crossed his path. He had not proceeded far, however, when another fox, and then another, and finally a legion of them offered to his eager pursuit. Bewildered by so many bushy tails, he gave up the chase in disgust; and I am sorry to state that this species of *embarras de richesse*, spoiled sport for him in all his subsequent sorties, excepting when, on a visit to the creek of Macanillal, we "caught a tartar" in the shape of a full-grown

crocodile, which we mistook for a young one. This adventure, however, afforded him a good deal of amusement, and some surprise to those engaged in the undertaking. It so happened that only the end of the reptile's tail was out of water in a very shallow spot, the rest of its body being entirely buried among the roots of a large stump. Judging from the apparent smallness of the tail that we could easily drag out the creature, and his lordship having expressed a desire to obtain the specimen for preservation, Roseliano immediately volunteered his services. He tried in vain, however, to bring it to light unassisted, whereupon a lazo was brought into requisition, and having noosed the tail therewith, we succeeded in pulling the reptile out of its hiding-place, when, to our great astonishment and trepidation, we discovered that it was a large and full-grown female crocodile with a brood of young ones among the roots of the old tree. She struggled furiously in defence of her brood, several of which we captured and presented to our guest; but when the time came for disposing of the mother and recovering the lazo, we found that it would prove no child's play, inasmuch as she had full command of her jaws. After several ineffectual attempts to stab her while in water, we succeeded at length in dragging her partly from her lair, and then only were we enabled to unfasten the noose. A stab or two in the armpits, causing a flow of blood, speedily brought the caribes to finish the job, after which we returned to the house, much gratified at having rid the creek of this dangerous family.

On our way back I met with a severe accident,

and narrowly escaped serious injury from it. We were cantering along a beautifully level piece of ground, covered with short grass; this suggested to my English friends the idea of testing the relative swiftness of our horses. Off we at once started, and had proceeded but a short distance, when we found our way obstructed by a dried-up creek. The Englishmen, as a matter of course, delighted, leaped it at a bound; but my pony, not being sufficiently strong to clear the obstruction, missed the opposite bank and fell, rolling over with me into the ditch. I was a good deal bruised in consequence, and the house being still at considerable distance, suffered intensely in reaching it. This accident prevented me from joining in the other sports devised for the entertainment of our noble guest, who, however shortly afterward bade us adieu and returned to the sea coast. He preferred, on this occasion, the route through Nutrias and Barinas, that he might escape the tedious descent of the rivers; a messenger was therefore despatched to Ciudad Bolivar, ordering his yacht to meet him at Puerto Cabello. Disabled by my recent mishap, I could not, much to my regret, accompany him; a guide of his own selection was, however, furnished in the person of our negro troubadour Quintana, for whom his lordship had evinced a decided predilection, even extending to him an invitation to visit "Old England," the friend and protector of benighted Africa; but we could not spare him for so long a trip; and as Llaneros have an innate aversion to trusting themselves on unknown waters, the acquaintanceship terminated on the borders of the Caribbean Sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

After the departure of Lord James Butler from El Frio, we began to think that it was also high time for us to be getting ready for our return homeward. The task of retracing our steps, however, was not an easy thing to accomplish with three thousand oxen to look after, besides the other animals we brought there; and this in the face of the approaching inundation of the savannas.

As soon as our preparations were completed, we took our final departure from El Frio, which perhaps we were destined never to revisit, stopping at San Pablo for a few days to make further arrangements at the pass for crossing the river with our immense train of animals and baggage. On our way to San Pablo, we were nigh being put to rout, and our labors scattered to the winds, by an invasion of a small bloody fly termed *mosquilla*, which makes its appearance at the commencement of the rainy season, and which, for destructiveness to flesh and blood, surpasses any thing I have yet seen in the shape of an

insect. In an instant we were enveloped in a swarm of these terrible creatures, which fastened themselves upon us and the cattle with a tenacity like that of hungry leeches, maddening both man and beast, and causing streams of blood to flow from the bites. The only relief we found for a while was to drive the cattle at full speed across the plain; but this expedient, although for the time it frightened away the flies, came very near producing also a complete dispersion of the herd. We therefore resigned ourselves to endure their torturing attacks until they had gorged themselves with blood.

From San Pablo we despatched men on to Apurito, where we proposed crossing the river with the cattle, to make preparations for this toilsome work; and then started for Achaguas, the inhabitants of which town had tendered our Leader an earnest invitation to visit his old head-quarters. After an easy ride of about three hours, we forded on horseback the arm of the Apure River which, running in a south-easterly direction, forms with the Arauca and the main channel of the former the island of Achaguas, on which the capital of the province, a collection of mud hovels, is situated. A brood of scaly crocodiles basking in the sun, and a herd of tame cattle refreshing themselves in the middle of the stream, were the only signs of animation we perceived on our approach to the renowned capital of the Apure. In spite of its present dilapidated condition, Achaguas did not fail to interest me more than any other spot in Apure, being my birthplace, and the stronghold for many years of my country's independence. The Governor

of the province, Señor Arciniega, accompanied by the few officials in the place, came out after a while to greet our Leader, as did also the veteran General Cornelio Muñoz, former Commander of the famous *Guardia de Honor*, or *Colorados de Paez*, which under the leadership of both these generals, performed so many prodigies during the long struggle between Royalists and Patriots, which resulted in the final overthrow of Spanish domination in Colombia. At that epoch of historical interest to the friends of liberty in America, Achaguas held the most conspicuous position as the head-quarters of the patriot armies, a brief sketch of which may not be uninteresting to my readers.

The arms of the republic were at first unsuccessful, and Venezuela submitted to the government of the mother country, the Spanish commander, Don Antonio Monteverde, having triumphed over the patriot forces in 1812. By this time, however, a new champion of the republican cause was rising in the south, amidst the wild scenes I have endeavored to depict in the foregoing pages. This champion was Captain José A. Paez, then a youth of twenty Aprils, who conceived the happy idea of collecting a horde of undisciplined Llaneros in the plains of Casanare to oppose the overwhelming forces of Spain. His intimate acquaintance with the country, and his thorough mastery in all the sports of the Llaneros, admirably fitted him to carry out his plans successfully. How he came there, and by what means he acquired the requisite proficiency for the arduous enterprise, the following anecdote of his early career will explain.

When seventeen years of age, an uncle of his, the good Priest of Araure, his native place, entrusted him with a large sum of money to deliver safely into the hands of the curate of a distant parish, furnishing him for the journey with a mule, an old pistol, and a rusty sword; for, even at that period of comparative quiet and peace (1807) it was dangerous for a traveller to venture over the roads alone, and carrying with him the tempting metal. The future President of the Republic, highly elated at the great confidence reposed in him, with the usual inexperience of youth, spoke freely about his commission in the first inn he stopped at to get his meals. The consequence of this imprudence was, that shortly after he left the inn, he was attacked on the road by three men, who, as a matter of course, demanded *la bolsa ó la vida.* The youthful traveller, however, dismounted with the old pistol in his hand already cocked, and now threatening one and then the other of his assailants, endeavored to repel them. At last, being too closely pressed, he fired the pistol at the nearest robber, with such good aim that he killed his adversary on the spot, while the fragments of the barrel, which burst at the same time, struck another in the face. Then charging resolutely upon the third bandit with the rusty sword, he quickly put both to flight, leaving behind them the corpse of their wretched comrade. Notwithstanding the obvious propriety of his conduct on this occasion, acting as he did in self-defence, the young man feared the consequences; he imagined himself already accused, persecuted, without the means of proving his innocence, and therefore determined to

hide himself by going into the interior of the plains, hoping thus to escape a punishment which his error made him regard as inevitable. Determined to gain an honest livelihood, he sought employment on the cattle farm of La Calzada, in the province of Barinas, where he soon became inured to the fatigues of the ranger's life; acquiring at the same time, under the tuition of a cruel negro majordomo, that proficiency in horsemanship which later in life gave him the superiority over the enemy.

Proud and jealous at the same time of his white apprentice, whom he imagined had been sent there by his master to spy his actions, the negro overseer of La Calzada spared no opportunity to put to the test the courage and strength of the future champion of those plains, sometimes compelling him to break in the most vicious horses, which often led him off for days into the open fields; at other times ordering him away upon the most hazardous ventures of the Llanos. Not satisfied with this show of authority over his pupil, the brutal black Mentor of young Paez ended the fatigues of a hard day's labor by ordering him to bring a pail of water and wash his muddy feet! But the tide of fortune soon changed; the whirlwind of revolution offered Paez a new field of adventure, and the humble peon of La Calzada rapidly gained the highest posts in the patriot army while the haughty overseer went to increase the ranks of the opposing foe. In the course of events the majordomo was brought one day a prisoner to Paez, who not only spared his life, but kept him always near his person, his only revenge being to imitate the

tone of his former tyrant when calling upon young Paez to exercise the functions of the slave: "*Niño José Antonio!* bring a bowl of water to wash my feet!" to which the old negro humbly replied, "I see, *niño*, you have not forgotten your old tricks."

When the revolution broke out, on the 19th of April, 1810, Paez enlisted in the militia of Barinas as a common soldier, and soon after was promoted to the rank of sergeant of cavalry. This, however, being rather a slow process of promotion, he proceeded to organize an independent body of cavalry, with which he rendered important service to the cause of independence. But the path of glory was not without thorns, and our young leader found himself a prisoner in the hands of the merciless Spaniards, owing his preservation, as it was then believed, to the influence of a miracle. In those days a war without quarter was fiercely waged. The province of Barinas having been again occupied by the royalist forces, Paez fell into the hands of the cruel Puy, was thrown into prison and ordered to be executed in the city of Barinas the next day. At that time military executions of captured enemies were conducted by leading them out during the night to some lonely spot, where they were despatched with the lance or the sword. Paez and a number of his fellow-prisoners were thus being led out one night, when he observed, as he was leaving the prison, that he was uncovered; believing himself to be only going to make his deposition before the Governor, he requested his companion in the cell to lend him his hat. The Spanish officer

in charge of the mournful cortege, failing to recognize him under this guise, ordered him back to be exchanged for the owner of the hat, who, he supposed, was the identical "captain of the rebels." Thus he obtained unwittingly a respite of one day. The following night he was awakened about eleven o'clock by a great noise of horsemen and infantry in the street. He imagined they were coming to lead him and the rest of his fellow-prisoners to the place of execution. He prepared, therefore, to die; but Providence saved his life once more. The noise of arms and horses in the street had been occasioned by an alarm in consequence of information received by Governor Puy, that a considerable army of patriots was encamped on the banks of the Santo Domingo river, on which Barinas is situated, and was about marching on the city. Several parties, coming from different directions, confirmed the information received by the Governor, and the panic became general. It was supposed that the patriots in large numbers intended to take the Spanish garrison by surprise and seize upon the Governor. The latter, therefore, immediately abandoned Barinas with his forces, leaving only a few men to guard the prison, for in his hurry he had forgotten to execute the prisoners, as he had done before on similar occasions. This was the time for Paez to make a bold effort to save his life. The next morning he embraced the opportunity, broke his fetters, helped to release his fellow-prisoners, and overpowered one of the sentinels, who attempted to oppose his escape. Paez then fled to put himself once more at the head of a small band of

patriots, to harass the enemy in the same province of Barinas. On the morning succeeding the alarm, the royalists could not discover an enemy for more than fifty miles around the city. The alarm and panic occasioned by the reported approach of an enemy in the night, confirmed by so many persons, some of whom had gone out to reconnoitre, and the most singular disappearance, or absence, of this host on the following morning, gave rise to the popular belief, existing to this day among the common people, that the life of Paez was saved by the friendly intercession and miraculous appearance of an army of departed spirits, known as the *Escuadron de las Animas.*

Many combats and encounters took place after this, between the royalists and patriots for the possession of Barinas, and when, at last, the city was evacuated by the latter, Paez followed the movements of commandant Garcia de Sena into the mountainous province of Merida. Garcia de Sena, finding the cavalry cumbersome in the difficult passes of the mountains, dismissed them in the town of Las Piedras. It was then that Paez, once again free to act according to his own judgment and impulses, conceived the idea of going through the centre of New Granada to the plains of Casanare, south of the province of Apure. This plan was the result of experience, which convinced him that the patriots could not triumph, notwithstanding their unheard-of efforts, while the Spaniards held possession of the plains and controlled the supply of horses. The acquisition of the Llanos gave the superiority to the Spaniards, as, by means of it, they had a source of supplies and a

safe retreat. Paez determined, therefore, to make that wild region the base of his military operations, and with this object organized a body of horsemen in the plains of Casanare, which he soon after led into the province of Apure.

In the language of another, "no man was better calculated to command the love and respect of his wild soldiery. Great bravery, a thorough knowledge of localities, an affable and familiar treatment of his followers, procured for Paez great popularity and an unlimited sway over the minds of his men. He was one of the best riders in a district of country celebrated for good horsemen, and understood the management of the lance, his favorite weapon, almost to perfection. He possessed great bodily strength and agility, and few could compete with him in the wild sports of the Llaneros, or inhabitants of the immense plains of Venezuela."

The Llanos are, in fact, a permanent camp of military instruction for their intrepid inhabitants. Accustomed from their infancy to subdue the wild horse, to master the wild bull, to swim across broad streams, and to grapple in single combat with the crocodile, the tiger and wild boar, the Llaneros learn to despise danger. When the war turned them from their ordinary occupations, the enemy found them ready-made soldiers. Inhabiting a genial atmosphere and endowed with iron constitutions, their wants are few and insignificant; in peace, the lazo and the horse; in war, the horse and the lance. Perfectly acquainted with the country and unencumbered with heavy accoutrements, the dwellers of the Llanos can-

not be conquered except by men of the same region, and Venezuela possesses in those limitless plains and in the breasts of their valorous children, the strongest bulwark of her national independence.

Paez, now master of his own military movements, resolved to meet the enemy there, and, if possible, to bring about an engagement. On the 16th of February, 1816, he commenced his march in pursuit of the royalist chief, Don Rafael Lopez, and in three hours' space met him at a place called Mata de la Miel, on the right bank of the river Apure. The royalist leader had two pieces of artillery and sixteen hundred men, whom he drew up at once in order of battle. Paez's forces amounted altogether to about six hundred cavalry. It was evening and the night fast advancing, on which account many of the patriot officers were of opinion that the engagement should be postponed until the following day. This very reason, however, determined the leader to enter at once into action, as he feared that his soldiers, observing the great superiority of the enemy in numbers, might take advantage of the night to desert. Paez accordingly divided his forces in two columns, placing the one, composed of New Granadians, under command of Captain Genaro Vasquez, and the other, composed of Venezuelians, under Captain Ramon Nonato Perez. The royalists were completely routed, and during all that night and the two following days the forces led by Paez pursued and captured a great portion of those under Don Rafael Lopez. Such was the action of Mata de la Miel. There were left dead on the field four hundred royalists, and a great number of prisoners were taken,

together with about three thousand five hundred horses and nearly all the enemy's arms. Four months afterward, in June, Lopez again crossed the Apure with twelve hundred horsemen and four hundred infantry, but Paez met him near Mantecal and compelled him to retreat, after losing many men and horses.

Notwithstanding these advantages on the part of the patriot forces, the result of the following campaigns (1814, 1815, and 1816) was most disastrous to the arms of the republic elsewhere; Venezuela, New Granada, and the plains of Casanare again fell into the hands of the vengeful Spaniards. In 1816, a very numerous emigration of patriots, consisting of men, women, and children, in a state of great destitution and suffering, fled to the wilderness from the persecution of the royalists, and took refuge in the camp of Paez. Many persons of distinction were to be found among the fugitives, and a system of government was established for the regulation of affairs. A meeting of officers was held at Arichuna, and Paez appointed supreme chief, with the rank of General of Brigade. He applied himself immediately to raise sufficient forces to oppose Don Rafael Lopez and to acquire, if possible, some resources in his extreme want. The hardships and privations endured by the patriot army on the plains can scarcely be conceived. The soldiers were so destitute of clothing as to be compelled to use for a covering the hides of the cattle freshly killed; very few had hats, none shoes. The ordinary and only food was beef, without salt and without bread. There were, in addition to all this,

continual rains, and the rivers and creeks had overflowed and covered over the country. They wanted horses, and as these are indispensable to the Llaneros, they must be obtained before any thing else. Only wild horses could be procured, and they had to be tamed and broken. This was done in squadrons, and it was a curious spectacle to see five or six hundred riders at a time struggling to subdue these wild animals. Around the ground were stationed several officers, mounted on well-trained horses, whose duty it was to go after those which escaped from their riders, to prevent them from carrying away the saddles, although these were made of wood, with thongs of raw hides. Many years after these scenes, an eye-witness wrote: "We courted danger in order to put an end, with honor, to such a miserable life." To provide against this misery, Paez now turned his attention to the nearest source of supply, Barinas, a city abounding in all the commodities he stood most in need of. Although nearly two hundred miles distant, the patriot chieftain did not hesitate to invade his old antagonist in the midst of the rainy season. The undertaking could not, however, be executed without great peril and hardships, he having to contend not only against the inveterate enemies who occupied all the approaches to the city, but against the inundation of the savannas at the time. The expedition, moreover, had to be conducted with great secrecy, avoiding even the few channels left open in those inland seas for the transit of men on horseback. Not in the least deterred by obstacles so formidable in themselves, Paez got together one thousand picked men, and two

thousand white horses, animals of this color being reputed the best swimmers. With these, he crossed the Apure and several other streams, then at the height of their flood, being compelled besides to ford extensive lagoons of various depths to avoid the numerous gunboats of the enemy, stationed at all the important passes. In one of these, on the river Suripa, the expedition was fortunate enough to capture by surprise a gunboat and a large quantity of hides, which were left behind with a strong guard for future use. When near Barinas, Paez sent a detachment to surprise also the town of Pedraza, to the south-east of the capital, with the object of drawing the attention of the royalists in that direction. The ruse succeeded admirably; the small detachment of men carried every thing before them, penetrating as far as the plaza, and then retreated, according to instructions, to rejoin the main body. Enraged at their audacity, the Spanish commander at Barinas sent out a large force in pursuit of the attacking party, thus weakening his own force. Paez then advanced against Barinas, disposing his line of march in single file, each horseman followed by his spare horse, tied to the tail of his own sumpter. The object of this arrangement was to deceive the royalists also in regard to the real numbers of the enemy, which from a distance presented a very imposing appearance. Barinas is situated on the border of an extensive plain, bounded on the south by the *mesa* of the same name, through which Paez made his entry into the doomed city when the sun was in the meridian. The dreaded army of "departed spirits" did not produce a more

appalling consternation among the royalists than the apparition of this unexpected body of ragged horsemen. They knew full well that, owing to the overflow of the savannas, no advance could be made upon the city from the south. They felt equally secure against any attack from the north and from the east, which were then entirely under their control, while on the west they were still better protected by the lofty Sierra Nevada. Without stopping to ascertain the real character of the force before them, the royalists collected together in a great hurry whatever valuables they prized most, and had already loaded several mules with them, when the enemy, dashing forward in full gallop, arrived in time to secure the rich booty, after dispersing the owners and their troops. The half-clad followers of Paez then fell upon the stores and abandoned houses of the royalists with the eagerness of men who had not seen a respectable garment in a long time. One of the officers was fortunate enough to capture a mule loaded with thirty thousand dollars in gold, while every man in the party got more goods than he could carry.

Paez only remained a sufficient time at Barinas to arrange the transportation of the booty, which took up nearly all the spare horses brought along for this purpose; without these and the hides seized at Suripa, it would have been impossible to remove it to the patriot camp in the wilderness. Owing to the presence of a strong flotilla of gunboats at the mouth of the river, the captured vessel had to be abandoned after a while, and the wearisome route across the inundated savannas resumed by the returning caravan.

The hides served the double purpose of covering for the goods and lighters to ferry them over the streams. This species of leather canoe is an ingenious contrivance frequently resorted to in those wild regions wherever there is a scarcity of boats, and consists in a bag or trough formed by passing a rope through a number of holes round the rim of the hide, and gathering it over the goods. One end of the rope of sufficient length is then handed over to a good swimmer, who takes it between his teeth and tows the lighter after him. In this manner, the immense booty obtained at Barinas was successfully transported over one hundred miles of inundated plains, to the inconceivable joy of the wretched emigrants at the camp of Arichuna.

After allowing his troop sufficient time to rest from their fatigues, and finding it to his advantage to resume the offensive, at least to occupy the attention of his soldiers, Paez commenced his march toward Achaguas, although the season was still very severe. The march was slow, as, besides the difficulties of the road, they were encumbered by numerous emigrants, and compelled, at every step, to procure supplies on account of the want of stores. The great multitude of men, women, and children, moving with the army, represented to the life the picture of a nomadic people without home or country, who, after consuming the resources of the district they have occupied, raise their tents to conquer another.* In this manner they

* Nevertheless, Paez took particular care to preserve the breed of cattle on the plains of Apure. Notwithstanding that he was continually engaged in war, he issued most effective orders to prevent its extinc-

arrived at the sand hills or Médanos de Araguayuna, where, having left the emigrants under the protection of a resolute band of horsemen, Paez incorporated all the men capable of bearing arms in his ranks, and marched against Lopez, whom he supposed to be at Achaguas. But after proceeding a short distance, he learned that the enemy, to the number of seventeen hundred horsemen and four hundred infantry, was at the cattle farm called Yagual. Paez then changed his course and took his position between the enemy and the city of Achaguas. His army was divided into three columns, commanded by Generals Urdaneta and Servier, and by Colonel Santander; they were nearly all armed with lances, very few with muskets or carabines, and the supply of ammunition was scanty. On the 8th of October, they came in sight of the enemy, and although their number much exceeded that of the patriot forces, Paez did not hesitate to give them battle. The conflict was long and severe, but it was decidedly in favor of the patriots. Don Rafael Lopez was compelled to abandon his position, after sustaining a severe loss; on the next day he refused to renew the battle and fell back upon Achaguas, having previously shipped on the river Arauca all his artillery and wounded for San Fernando. On the 13th, Lopez, having made a short resistance, abandoned the town, of which Paez took possession. Shortly after this, Lopez being attacked by surprise on the banks of the Apure, was utterly

tion. The origin of all the cattle estates which are at present to be found in Venezuela is to be traced to the Apure plains.

defeated, his forces dispersed, and he himself lost his life.

At the head of his brave soldiers, Paez rescued the province of Apure, a part of that of Barinas, in Venezuela, and recovered that of Casanare, in New Granada. Having increased his force by the new levies raised in these provinces and in others, he formed that army which subsequently rendered such important services in the cause of freedom, and whose exploits have been so much admired.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

WHILE these events were taking place in the distant plains of Venezuela, Spain, having bravely expelled the French invaders from her territory, now turned the whole strength of her arms against her rebellious colonies. Several expeditions were despatched under the command of the ablest Generals, and provided with all the material for a vigorous campaign. One of these, led by Lieutenant-General Don Pablo Morillo, set sail from Cadiz on the 18th of February, 1815. It consisted of sixty-five transport ships and other smaller vessels, convoyed by the line-of-battle ship San Pedro Alcantara, mounting seventy-four guns, and having on board the regiments of Leon, Victoria, Estremadura, Barbastro, Union, (afterward known as Valencey,) Cazadores of Castile, and the General's battalion of infantry Cazadores, the regiments of dragoons of the Union, and the hussars of Ferdinand VII., a park of artillery with eighteen pieces, two companies of fortress artil-

lery, three of sappers, and a park provided with all that was requisite to besiege a second-class fortress. The total number of men composing this expedition, including the marines, amounted to fifteen thousand. The ships carrying this formidable armament cast anchor, on the 3d April, 1815, in Puerto-Santo, to the windward of Carupano in Venezuela. Morillo, the commander of this expedition, was a brave, active, and energetic officer, cool in action, a severe disciplinarian, and was beloved by his soldiers. Besides this force, there was a royalist army of five thousand men in Venezuela, commanded by Morales.

At first, General Morillo met with little or no opposition, until, going into the interior, he encountered the wild horsemen of the plains. The haughty temper of the Spanish commander-in-chief could not bear that a handful of semi-savages, as he was pleased to style them, should insult the pennant of Castile any longer, and he therefore prepared to capture every one of them; with what results, the sequel of this narrative will show.

In the early part of January, 1817, the Spanish commanders La Torre and Calzada effected a junction at Guasdualito, on the plains of Apure. About the same time, the royalist brigadier Don Ramon Correa and the Lieutenant-Colonel Don Salvador Gorrin left San Fernando with fifteen hundred men, and with his cavalry and infantry attacked the line of the patriots and completely routed Guerrero, the republican General, forcing him to fall back upon Paez, after a bloody battle, in which the patriots sustained a considerable loss. The siege of San Fernando being

raised in consequence of this triumph, the attention of La Torre and Calzada was directed to Paez, who presented the greatest obstacle to their occupation of the river Apure and its adjacent plains. An army of four thousand veteran soldiers of all arms, including seventeen hundred of the cavalry commanded by Colonel Remigio Ramos, presented a force sufficient to inspire the Spanish commander with confidence, particularly as La Torre, who was a brave and accomplished soldier, was anxious to distinguish himself among his companions in arms. He, therefore, marched to the town of San Vicente, following the right bank of the river Apure, with the intention of attacking Paez who was then in Mantecal. On the 28th of January, the patriots and royalists met on the plain of Las Mucuritas; the former with a body of cavalry amounting only to eleven hundred horsemen, and the latter with the forces already mentioned. The result of the engagement was as unfortunate to La Torre as it proved advantageous to the patriots under Paez, who on this occasion made up for his inferiority in numbers by means of a stratagem which nearly resulted in the destruction of the entire Spanish army. The order of battle adopted by the royalist leader was the best which the nature of the ground and the enemy he had to contend with would permit; his infantry presented a strong and compact front, while his cavalry was posted on the wings and on the rear. Paez having only cavalry, could not come within the range of the enemy's muskets without running the risk of being wholly destroyed, and he consequently con-

ceived the idea of separating the royalist horse from the infantry. The presumptuous confidence of Colonel Ramos and the inexperience of La Torre in the Llanero's tactics, facilitated the execution of Paez's plan. Having formed two columns with a portion of his forces, Paez ordered them to attack the enemy's flanks, and then immediately to retreat, as if they had been repulsed. His object was to draw out the enemy's cavalry in the heat of the pursuit, and at once surround them with two other columns which he had ready prepared for that purpose. This simple manœuvre had the desired effect, and La Torre's cavalry was speedily destroyed. The European hussars alone escaped, because they advanced with less precipitancy and in better order. The republican leader now ordered the dry grass of the plain to be set on fire, and it instantly became a sea of flame. Fortunately for La Torre, his infantry retreating precipitately in close column, succeeded in reaching a spot which had been burned some time before. Even there, his infantry sustained several charges from Paez's cavalry, compelling him ultimately to seek a refuge in a dense wood on the right bank of the Apure, where the pursuit ceased for want of infantry on the part of the patriots. Of this battle, General Morillo wrote: "Fourteen consecutive charges upon my wearied battalions, convinced me that those men were not a small gang of cowards, as had been represented to me." On the following morning, Morillo joined La Torre, and continued with him his march to San Fernando without crossing the Apure, and always in sight of the republican cavalry. Paez

finally perceiving that the enemy avoided a new engagement, retired to San Juan de Payara.

In 1817, General Bolívar appeared in the province of Guayana, and his first effort was to open his communication with Paez, who did not hesitate to recognize his authority, although widely separated from the Liberator's head-quarters.

From this period, the patriots began to extend their operations; a series of brilliant actions took place at various points, and the republican cause appeared to revive on the line of the Apure and the Orinoco rivers. The acquisition of Guayana under Piar was an important and decisive event in the history of the war; by means of it, Bolívar was in a situation to harass the posts occupied by the royalists, on any point of the immense line embraced by the Orinoco and its numerous tributaries; he had approached the island of Trinidad, had obtained supplies of men, horses, and cattle, and secured a communication with Paez.

In the beginning of January, 1818, Paez determined to take the fortified town of San Fernando by assault; to this end, he directed that two gunboats, captured from the royalists, and eight or ten other boats, should rendezvous on the creek of Biruca, connecting with the Apure; said vessels were to lie in ambush there, ready to land at San Fernando a chosen body of men on the night of the 14th, while the rest of the army engaged the attention of the enemy in another direction. But two deserters, who went over to the royalists, betrayed the plan, and before it could be executed, an unexpected and vigorous attack was made on the boats, all of which fell into the

together with about three thousand five hundred horses and nearly all the enemy's arms. Four months afterward, in June, Lopez again crossed the Apure with twelve hundred horsemen and four hundred infantry, but Paez met him near Mantecal and compelled him to retreat, after losing many men and horses.

Notwithstanding these advantages on the part of the patriot forces, the result of the following campaigns (1814, 1815, and 1816) was most disastrous to the arms of the republic elsewhere; Venezuela, New Granada, and the plains of Casanare again fell into the hands of the vengeful Spaniards. In 1816, a very numerous emigration of patriots, consisting of men, women, and children, in a state of great destitution and suffering, fled to the wilderness from the persecution of the royalists, and took refuge in the camp of Paez. Many persons of distinction were to be found among the fugitives, and a system of government was established for the regulation of affairs. A meeting of officers was held at Arichuna, and Paez appointed supreme chief, with the rank of General of Brigade. He applied himself immediately to raise sufficient forces to oppose Don Rafael Lopez and to acquire, if possible, some resources in his extreme want. The hardships and privations endured by the patriot army on the plains can scarcely be conceived. The soldiers were so destitute of clothing as to be compelled to use for a covering the hides of the cattle freshly killed; very few had hats, none shoes. The ordinary and only food was beef, without salt and without bread. There were, in addition to all this,

were boarded on all sides and captured by the patriots. This dangerous manœuvre was performed at a distance of two miles from San Fernando, which, from that moment, was cut off from all communication with Morillo. The patriot army being thus provided with the means of transportation across the Apure, a body of cavalry was immediately despatched in the direction of the road leading to Calabozo, and succeeded in capturing by surprise a party of twenty-five men, who composed the advanced post of the enemy. In consequence of this manœuvre, Morillo was also taken by surprise on the 11th of February, at a time when his hussars and a portion of the battalion of Castille were at a place called Mision de Abajo, about three miles to the south of Calabozo. Only a few men from both regiments, with a Colonel, succeeded in making their escape to the intrenchments in the city. The sturdy veteran, Morillo, could not believe the report of his Colonel, that the whole patriot army was marching upon him. Haughtily accusing that officer of cowardice, he sallied forth in person with his staff to reconnoitre what he supposed to be a band of guerrillas; but he himself had to flee for safety into the city, narrowly escaping death through the stoical heroism of his insulted Colonel, who threw himself between the Commander-in-chief and the lance of one of Paez's staff officers.

Instead of investing the royalists at once, Bolívar committed the error of encamping for the night with all his troops at the village of El Rastro, about four miles this side of Calabozo. Morillo improved

this opportunity to abandon the city under cover of night, and fell back on Caracas, by the mountainous route of El Sombrero, where the patriots could not follow him on account of the inferiority of their infantry. Paez then returned to the Apure, while Bolívar remained with the bulk of the army, to be soon after entirely annihilated at La Puerta by the royalist General. But the Genius of the Andes was untiring in his efforts to see his country, and the rest of the South American Continent, free from European oppression.

On the 16th January, 1819, Bolívar joined Paez again at San Juan de Payara with a newly organized *corps d'armée*, and their united forces amounted to four thousand men. Bolívar, as a recompense for the important services rendered by Paez to his country, raised him to the rank of General of Division, and left him in command of all the forces, while he proceeded to Angostura, where Congress was to meet in February. About this time the royalist Generals, Morillo and La Torre, also joined their forces at San Fernando, amounting in all to six thousand five hundred men of all arms. With these they immediately proceeded to attack the patriots at San Juan in the beginning of February. Paez retreated toward the Orinoco, transported all his infantry to the island of Urbana, and took up a position, with his guard and two squadrons of carabineers, at Cunaviche; the remainder of his horsemen he stationed on the plains of Rio Claro, and a most cumbersome emigration of ten thousand patriot refugees, that followed his camp, was taken to Araguaquen. The plan adopted by

Paez on this occasion was precisely the same as the one always practised by him in former campaigns; yet the royalist General was so infatuated in his eagerness to destroy what he called the "Gang of Apure," that he was easily led away into the wilderness before he was conscious of his danger. On the 11th of February, Morales, who commanded the vanguard of the royalist forces, was stationed at the cattle farm of Cañafistola; while one of his squadrons of cavalry was engaged in collecting cattle for the army, Paez, who never lost sight of him, appeared suddenly with twelve hundred horsemen, and, without giving the enemy time to retreat, threw them into disorder, and cut them up. He then charged upon Morales, and a quick, constant firing had commenced, when the principal body of the Spanish army appeared in the distance. The patriots now retreated toward Cunaviche, keeping their adversary under observation; at night, however, they retraced their steps, and in the morning appeared situated a short distance in the opposite direction. Morillo countermarched and continued for many days wandering over that wilderness, renewing his efforts to overtake an enemy which kept constantly before him, like the mirage of the desert, and which did him great injury by driving away the cattle. The only means that Morillo could employ to overtake his opponent and force him to battle, was to use his cavalry; but the employment of this arm jeopardized the only force which procured the subsistence of the army, and might thus compromise its safety. At length, convinced of the inutility of his efforts, he recrossed the Arauca and in the early part

of March, established his head-quarters at Achaguas.

On the first day of April, General Morillo again resumed the offensive, marching along the left bank of the Arauca and approaching the position occupied on the right bank by Generals Paez and Bolívar; the latter had recently returned from the Congress at Angostura, where he had been elected President of the Republic, and resumed the command in chief of the army. Morillo made several feigned movements to the right and to the left, as if he wished to cross the river, and at noon of the 2d, took up his position nearly opposite that of Bolívar, out of range of the cannon. For the purpose of drawing him forth, General Paez crossed the river with one hundred and fifty horsemen, composed mostly of officers who volunteered for the hazardous undertaking; with these he formed three small columns and advanced upon the enemy. Morillo immediately put all his forces in motion; his infantry and artillery commenced firing, while the cavalry charged upon the small band of patriots, hoping to overpower by numbers the weak columns of the enemy; he himself directed his course toward the bank of the river. Paez, in the mean time, retreated in order, purposely leaving the pass of the river on his rear. Morillo, observing this, and supposing him inevitably lost, detached from the army all the cavalry in pursuit of Paez, and directed his fire upon the right bank, defended by some light troops. As soon, however, as the republican General perceived that the enemy's horse were at a considerable distance from the army, and in disorder, he faced

about suddenly, attacked his pursuers in front and on the flanks, in small groups of twenty men, and without giving them time to recover from their astonishment or to re-form the lines, he routed them, occasioning great loss. In vain they made the most obstinate resistance—in vain the carabineers dismounted—all their efforts were useless; disconcerted and taken by surprise, all those who opposed the vigorous attack were killed upon the spot. The victors pursued the remnants of the force as far as the enemy's lines, slaying all whom they overtook. Their infantry, thrown into confusion, sought refuge in the woods, the artillery ceased firing, and night prevented the further destruction of the royalist army. On the day following this encounter, Bolívar issued a decree, conferring the cross of Liberators (*Libertadores*) on all the officers, sergeants, corporals, and soldiers, who fought in this engagement, known in history by the name of Queseras del Medio; while the following proclamation announced to the army the success recently obtained by the republican arms:

SIMON BOLÍVAR PRESIDENT, ETC., ETC.

"*To the Heroes of the Army of Apure:*

"SOLDIERS! You have just performed the most extraordinary action that can be recorded in the military history of nations—one hundred and fifty men, or, rather, one hundred and fifty heroes, led on by the undaunted General Paez, have deliberately attacked in front the whole Spanish army, under Morillo;

artillery, infantry, cavalry, nothing availed to defend the enemy from the hundred and fifty companions of the intrepid Paez. The columns of their cavalry have disappeared under the strokes of our lances; their infantry sought a shelter in the woods; the roar of their cannon was silenced before the breasts of our horses, and only the darkness of night preserved the army of the tyrant from complete and absolute destruction.

"Soldiers! The deed you have performed is but the prelude of what you can accomplish. Prepare then for the combat, and reckon on victory, which you carry on the point of your lances and bayonets.

"BOLÍVAR.

"HEAD-QUARTERS AT POTRERITOS MARRERREÑOS, April 8, 1819."

After this engagement, Morillo, finding himself again deprived of his cavalry in the heart of the savannas, retreated precipitately to Achaguas, and finally to San Fernando, which place he fortified strongly, and recrossing the Apure, sought a more advantageous position against the attacks of his hovering enemy.

The engagement of Queseras del Medio was the precursor of new plans and bold projects, combined between Bolívar and Paez. The plains of Venezuela, being now entirely rescued from the enemy, these two Generals arranged the dangerous and important expedition that was to give freedom to New Granada. Paez had the honor accorded him of choosing which of the two should command the expedition. They both agreed that Bolívar should march into New

Granada, and that Paez should preserve, at all risks, the possession of the plains of Apure. Victory crowned the republican arms in New Granada, and Paez resolutely and successfully defended the important territory confided to his care and protection.

On the 17th December, 1819, Venezuela and New Granada were united into one great republic, under the name of Colombia, with a territory embracing nearly 500,000 square miles.

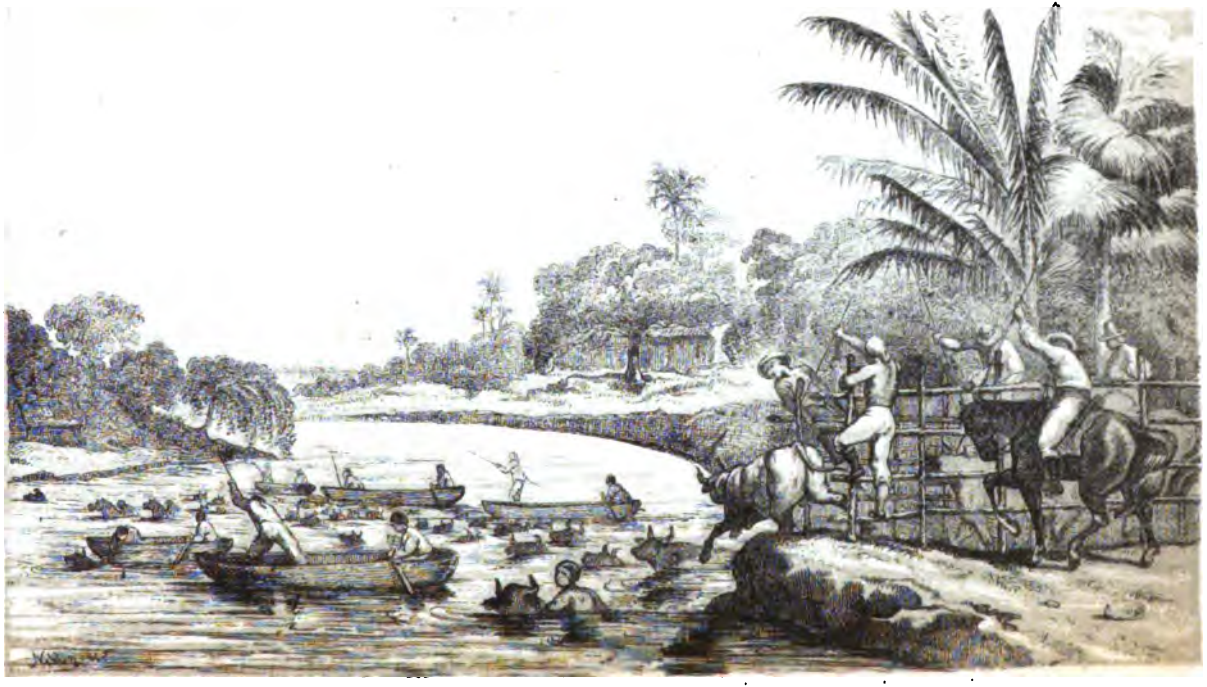
The year 1821 is celebrated for the important victory obtained by the republican army, under Bolívar and Paez, on the field of Carabobo, which secured Venezuela to the patriots. General Bolívar's forces amounted to 6,000 men. Only the first division of the army, commanded by Paez, took part in the battle. This division was composed of the famous British Legion, lately arrived from England, the battalion of Apure, and 1,500 horsemen. The field of Carabobo is a vast and open plain, lying in a southerly direction from Valencia. An army endeavoring to enter this plain from Tinaquillo, as the patriot army was attempting to do, is obliged, after passing the river Chirgua, to penetrate over the defile called Buena Vista, lying to the northeast. This defile is a formidable position, on which a few men can easily arrest the progress of an army. If this pass be gained, and the many obstructions be overcome, which an enemy can easily oppose over a rough and craggy road of considerable length, there still remains a narrow valley to be traversed, formed by hills, which constitute the entrance on the west to the plain of Carabobo; here the level ground commences. General La Torre,

the Spanish commander, had stationed in the valley and on both sides on the hills commanding it, several pieces of artillery, as well as strong bodies of infantry. On the plain near the opening of the valley the extended line of infantry was deployed in order of battle, with its right resting upon a thicket; next followed another line, and between the flanks of both, there were two strong bodies of cavalry. The second line of battle had on its left the road to El Pao, and the cavalry on the same side was stationed on the brow of a hill over which that road passes; the summit of the hill was occupied by a battalion. Such was the military position of the Spanish forces, amounting on this occasion to 9,000 men. On the 24th of June, the patriot General occupied the defile, and from that place observed the position of the enemy. The narrow road pursued by Bolívar allowed him only the room necessary to file off, and the Spaniards not only guarded the outlet into the plain, but commanded the valley with their artillery and a large body of infantry. The position was impregnable. It was therefore resolved that General Paez, with considerable risk and difficulty, should penetrate through a foot-path but little known, and turn the enemy's right. This path was extremely hazardous. It begins at the high road leading to San Carlos, to the west of the valley; goes over the top of a small hill covered with woods, which was commanded by the Spanish artillery, and leads into a ravine where the men were compelled to pass singly, because it was very rough and full of brambles and briars. When the enemy discovered the movement of the

advancing forces under Paez, he directed part of his own against the latter, and some of his battalions came up to the ravine, as the patriot battalion of Apure was beginning to pass it, and a vigorous firing commenced and was continued on both sides. The republican corps at last succeeded in passing the ravine, but no longer able to sustain singly the enemy's charge, was already giving way, when the British Legion came up to their support. The enemy had by this time brought into action four of his best battalions, against only one of the patriots. But the gallant Britons now filed off and formed in order of battle, under a murderous fire, with almost superhuman coolness, and kneeling down, they could not be made to yield an inch of ground. Almost all its officers were either killed or wounded; but the service rendered by those brave foreigners was great indeed. Their heroic firmness gave time for the battalion of Apure to rally and return to the charge, while two companies of *Tiradores*, led on by the gallant Heras, came also into the action. The enemy at last yielded under the simultaneous charge of the bayonet made by these different corps and fell back upon the cavalry for support. By this time the body-guard of General Paez, six hundred strong, had passed the ravine, and charging the enemy's horse on the rear of its columns, routed them completely and decided the action on that memorable day. Only one battalion, the famous Valencey, successfully repelled the furious charges of the patriot cavalry, which pursued the royalists as far as Valencia. General La Torre, with the remnant of his forces, shut himself up in the forti-

fications of Puerto Cabello, which were finally carried by assault on the 7th of November in the same year by General Paez.

The victory gained at Carabobo was complete and brilliant, decisive of the fate of the republic, and glorious to the brave soldiers of Apure, whose favored leader was raised by Bolívar to the rank of General-in-chief on the field of battle—an appointment which was subsequently ratified by Congress "in acknowledgment of his extraordinary valor and military virtues."



CHAPTER XXIV.

SCENES AT THE PASS OF APURITO.

When we were apprised that every thing was ready at the pass, we moved on from San Pablo with the horses, the cattle following behind by easy marches, to allow them sufficient time to graze on the rich herbage by the way.

On our arrival at Apurito, we found the river quite swollen with the recent showers and already extending from bank to bank. The first business was to select among our men and horses the strongest and most capable of enduring the fatigue and of guiding through the boisterous waves of the Apure the various lots into which the cattle were divided for the purpose. Our next step was to assemble at the pass a sufficient number of canoes with expert paddlers to act in concert with the leading men and horses, by flanking the swimmers in the river. Two long palisades, running parallel down to the bank of the river and narrowing toward the water, had already been constructed; through these the animals, in lots of two hundred at a time, were driven at full speed,

with deafening shouts and earnest goading, while two men, stripped naked and mounted on two spirited horses without saddles, headed the movement, plunging headlong into the river pell-mell with the cattle, which were thus encouraged to swim across. A herd of tame animals was stationed on the opposite shore to incorporate the swimmers as they came out of the water. Having done this, the leaders swam back to procure another lot of animals, a feat they performed for about twenty successive times in the course of the day. Nevertheless, the task was not so easily accomplished as was practised with the horses; for it often happened that the bulls became quite refractory and pugnacious, in which case the men in the canoes were obliged to hold them by the horns, dragging them along by main force as they paddled on; at other times the beasts got alongside of the leading men and horses, and then the danger to both was imminent, the bulls attacking them in the water; thus many valuable horses were killed by these infuriated animals, while the men had several narrow escapes. What with savage bulls, electric eels, crocodiles and caribes—not to mention other pernicious creatures of the waters and the broad expanse of the river before them—the task of these bold adventurers is truly appalling; yet they go to work and accomplish their task with a willing heart and a perfect *nonchalance* of every thing around them. The same might be said also in regard to the noble steeds which share with them the dangers of the river, acting at the same time the part of floating bridges to the men, and as decoys to the cattle during the passage. Their

powers of endurance, in this instance, are the more surprising, inasmuch as they are not allowed even a few moments' rest after they land, being kept in constant motion the whole day.

A number of horsemen with lazos were also stationed along the shore to secure those bulls which, eluding the vigilance of the men in the canoes, succeeded in regaining the land; many were drowned, however, in the attempt, and their carcasses abandoned to the turkey-buzzards, from an inherent disgust among the people of the Llanos for the flesh of animals which have not been killed in the usual way. On one or two occasions, the whole troop rebelled against their drivers and succeeded in making their escape to their pasture fields, in spite of the horsemen on shore; others, after reaching the sloping banks across the river below the pass, were arrested in their flight by the overhanging cliffs, and finally hurled to a watery grave by the rapid rise of the river.

Thus the cost of these expeditions, although exceedingly interesting to those participating in the excitement, is sometimes greater than the profits arising therefrom, and none but Llaneros, who are accustomed to live on beef and water, ought to indulge in this truly savage business. Our loss in horses alone, without reckoning the expenses of the expedition and the danger to flesh and bone, amounted on this occasion to about thirty animals, which in round figures, setting the value of every horse at the minimum price of one hundred dollars, would make the sum of three thousand dollars; while the value of the cattle itself, many of which were also lost to us, could hardly be

set down at five dollars a head at that epoch. One of the horses was so valuable, that our Leader requested the Doctor to attend the wounded animal and endeavor to save his life if possible. On examination, it was found that his bowels were partly forced out through the wound; but as he would not allow any body to touch him, it was resolved to tie his feet; then passing a pole through the legs of the animal, he was lifted from the ground in a reverse position, to allow the Doctor to operate more conveniently. It was already very dark, and the group of Llaneros lifting the patient, with others holding up lighted torches made of rags and tallow, and the humorous Esculapius leaning over the struggling beast, presented a scene ludicrous in the extreme. In spite of the skill with which he performed the operation, and the humane care of the owner, the horse expired the same night.

Three whole days were spent in the laborious occupation of forcing the cattle across the river. Nor were the nights less diligently employed at the village in the more entertaining recreation of dancing, flirting and gambling, according to the tastes and inclinations of our motley assembly. It must be confessed, however, that the latter had more incentives for the people of that pastoral region than the shepherd's reed and crook. Occasionally a fight would occur during these nocturnal revelries; but this, beyond some hard words and brandishing of swords and daggers by moonlight, which rather added to the picturesqueness of the scene, never ended in any thing very serious.

"Caló el chapeo, requirió la espada,
Miró al soslayo, fuése y no hubo nada."

The river was now rising so rapidly, that in order to reach our camp in the neighborhood of the village, we were obliged to place canoes across the main street leading to it, for fear of coming in contact with any of the numerous tenants of that stream. About this time the fish, conscious of the approaching inundation of the savannas, commence to ascend the river in search of those places best suited for spawning; and so great is the number of those that seek a nuptial rendezvous, that the noise they make in the water can be heard at some distance from the river. During their migration the water becomes so tainted with their flavor, that it is unfit to drink or wash in. Desirous of obtaining some live specimens for sketching, I procured a *tarraya*, or throw net, which I requested one of our men to launch near the bank; he

did so; but when he tried to lift it, he found it impossible unassisted, which made us fear that the net had got entangled among snags at the bottom of the river. A companion was called to our assistance, and between us three, we soon brought it up, when, to my astonishment and delight, I found the net full of *coporos*, *palometas*, and other delicacies; the caribes, however, soon rendered it perfectly useless, which circumstance I considered a misfortune, as I could not keep the fish long without spoiling. Next day I was advised by one of the villagers to place three or four canoes, partly filled with water, across the stream; the fish, finding their progress arrested by the obstruction, endeavored to jump over; in doing which they fell in the canoes by hundreds. The contrivance succeeded so well, that every morning I could depend on a plentiful supply, both for my sketch-book and the frying-pan. My attention was particularly attracted this time by a large fish called the *valenton*, from its great strength which, as I was informed, enables him to drag a canoe after him when caught with the hook and line. A distressing occurrence took place there which nearly cost the life of a young man while engaged in fishing for the *valenton*. The angler and a friend were engaged in conversation, with their lines thrown carelessly over the sides of the canoe, when the fish seized the bait and ran off, as he is in the habit of doing. The jerk was so violent, that the young man was unable to hold the line, and allowed it to slip through his hands; he was not aware that at the end of the line there was another hook, which buried itself in the thumb of his right

hand; the next moment he was violently pitched in the water and dragged for some distance, when fortunately the line broke, and he was picked up almost insensible by his companion. During its gambols in the river, the *valenton* jumps sometimes three feet clear out of the water, raising a large volume of spray and striking the surface with its powerful tail in its fall; so great is the splash, that the noise can be heard a great distance off, especially in the stillness of the night, when the fish seems to be more busily engaged in hunting.

Among the many eventful incidents of *la Independencia* still fresh in the memory of our Leader, he relates an anecdote in connection with the *Libertador*, Simon Bolívar, in which both these champions of freedom participated while engaged on an important reconnoissance during the rainy season. The savannas being, as usual, overflowed for the most part, and there being no other means of transportation than the frail canoes of the country, the two chieftains were compelled to travel in one of these over their inundated domain, with the assistance of two Indian paddlers. Fish were so numerous, that numbers of them, disturbed by the strokes of the paddles against the sides of the canoe, jumped in all directions, while not a few fell amidst the distinguished passengers. The Libertador who, like almost all great men, had also his weak points, possessed a very nervous temperament, especially about little things; therefore he felt quite uneasy at the unceremonious intrusion from the finny inhabitants of his swampy realms, whose movements he mistook for a mischievous propensity on their part

to attack the wayfarer. On the other hand, our Leader, who was always ready to practise a good joke, seized the opportunity to occasionally tip the canoe so as to make it ship water, and more fish along with it. Whereupon his companion, who was not aware of the trick practised upon him, imagining that the fish were becoming bolder as they advanced, exclaimed in utter despair, "D——n it! *Compañero*, let us pull back, for even the fish are savage in this country."

When the waters subside, thousands, nay, millions remain struggling in the ponds and little pools, left on the savannas, where they soon perish and rot away, tainting the air with their effluvium. Some of them, like the *curito*, a species of Silurus, covered with transverse plates surrounding the body, have the power of living buried in the indurated mud, from whence they are called to life again by the returning showers. As they form a most delicious mess, they are eagerly sought by men and women, who resort to these places armed with wicker baskets, and collect great numbers of the fish before they are carried away by the increasing inundation of the savannas.

A very singular belief, shared likewise, according to Sir Emerson Tennent, by the people of Ceylon, exists in the Apure respecting fish falling from the clouds. Alluding to this phenomenon, that ingenious writer observes: "Both at Galle and Colombo in the southwest monsoon, fish are popularly believed to have fallen from the clouds during violent showers; but those found on the occasions that give rise to this belief, consist of smallest fry, such as could be caught up by water spouts and vortices analogous to them,

or otherwise blown on shore from the surf; whereas those which suddenly appear in the replenished tanks and in the hollows which they overflow, are mature and well-grown fish. Besides, the latter are found under the circumstances I have described, in all parts of the interior, whilst the prodigy of a supposed fall of fish from the sky has been noticed, I apprehend, only in the vicinity of the sea or of some inland water."

Although the author further explains the phenomenon on the supposition that some fish are endowed with the power of locomotion over land, while others in a torpid state remain buried in the mud until the return of the rainy season; yet, I have been assured by reliable persons that live fish have been picked up in places where no such possible contingencies could occur; for instance, upon the roofs of houses or amidst wide plains far from running water. Most of those thus found are small, from three to seven inches long; but none of them capable of living more than twenty minutes out of water; and the father of the writer once even witnessed a fall of *bocachicos*, a fish which seldom lives over five minutes out of his own element.

Having accomplished our task as well as could be expected from such a primitive mode of ferriage, we transported ourselves and chattels across the broad stream, and immediately commenced our slow march over the prairies; our long train of baggage mules and wild beasts necessitated many stoppages by the way in order to incorporate stragglers, but more frequently to hunt anew the runaways among the latter.

The bulls especially showed a marked reluctance to leave behind their bellowing harems in the everglades across the river. Such was their love of home in this respect, that we were assured that most of those which succeeded in evading our pursuit, made their way back to their savannas in spite of the broad expanse of water which separated them. Much valuable time and patience were lost in this way, while the increasing inundation was following fast on our steps, so much so, that long after we had left the banks of the river on our rear, we had to wade through a continuous sheet of water, which was every moment rising above the fetlocks of our beasts. We also had to ford several smaller streams, already swollen by the rapid rise of the Apure; but, as no canoes could be had amidst those wilds, for love or money, we availed ourselves of the primitive contrivance devised on such occasions by means of a raw hide fashioned into a lighter. The trunks and boxes were carefully piled inside the skin, and if a person chose to avail himself of this frail barge, he had only to sit steadily on the top of the baggage; the load was then carefully launched on the water, the other end of the rope intrusted to the swimmer and towed in safety to the other side. In this manner our ponderous Doctor and a few others who were unwilling to expose their own skin to the tender mercies of the caribes, were successfully ferried across, although it required a steady nerve not to stir an inch and thus upset the whole concern. .

Our march across the prairies presented a splendid sight and was suggestive of a long file of prisoners

after a well-contested field of battle. At the head of the column, which extended for upward of a mile, marched a strong picket of horsemen, the *Punteros*, guiding the caravan; and on the sides and rear was another file of men with lazos ready to unfold after deserters. Lively tunes and whistling were kept up by the men for the diversion of the cattle, which appeared quite delighted with the music and in consequence became less restive on the march.

When near San Jaime, I, together with a party of young companions, having separated ourselves from the rest and taken another route, lost ourselves in the intricate passes leading to the village. This circumstance, although it delayed us for some time from reaching the camp, led us to an abundant field of rich honey, the production of a small wasp called *matajey*, which builds its nest on the branches of the trees, in the shape of a large ball. The sting of this insect is so distressing, that persons affected by it become feverish and benumbed; therefore, in order to possess ourselves of its delicious honey-combs, we took the precaution to smoke out the wasps by means of a burning rag at the end of a long pole applied to the mouth of the nest, when the whole swarm abandoned it to the hunters without molestation.

It was almost dark when we arrived at San Jaime, having hit accidentally upon the right path, after wandering the whole day through the woods; but, being well supplied with honey and water, we did not regret as much the loss of our dinner, as the fact of its having been prepared by another kind of swarm, but this time of pretty girls, who had assembled for

the purpose at the cottage of our hospitable host. We enjoyed, however, the pleasure of their unsophisticated society for some time before retiring to our hammocks where, fatigued by the toils of our previous adventure, we speedily lost ourselves again in "sweet, balmy sleep."

Being rather in a hurry to reach the pass before a sudden rise of the creeks connected with the river Portuguesa, we were up long before sunrise, and had barely time to partake of a substantial breakfast, prepared by our charming entertainers.

Immediately upon our arrival at the pass, we proceeded to force our cattle across the river, which being less wide than the Apure, and our herds having become more manageable after the long march, we were enabled to execute it in better order and less time than at the former river. Still we contrived somehow or other to tarry here longer than was necessary, having wasted three days in accomplishing what might have been the work of one. The fact is, that we were rather taken up with our former feminine acquaintances, especially at the close of day, when the party assembled in the barracoon, destined for the *fandango*, which was usually kept up the whole night.

Fitful accompaniment to these nocturnal revelries was the deafening croaking of the toads and frogs, now abounding by myriads in the marshes and quagmires of the vicinity. The shrill, metallic notes of the frogs, and the hoarse croaking of their milky brethren, are a feature which never fails to excite the astonishment of strangers in those regions. The former especially are so striking, that were an English-

man or American suddenly transported there, without knowledge of these sounds, he would imagine himself at home, in the neighborhood of ten thousand steam whistles. I was assured by our friend B., with reference to the toads of Guadarrama, a village on the banks of the Portuguesa, that one night he was thrown down in the street by coming in contact with one of these creatures, which he mistook for a boy in a stooping posture. Indignant at, what he supposed, the indiscretion of the fellow, B. was in the act of kicking him away when, to his surprise, he perceived the seeming boy slowly moving off in the shape of a big toad!

CHAPTER XXV.

CALABOZO.

While quietly absorbed one day in the pleasures of the angler by the banks of a creek not far from the camp, I was startled in my peaceful occupation by the report of fire-arms in that direction. There were rumors concerning the depredations of a band of robbers in that neighborhood, and therefore I had every reason to suppose they had been bold enough to attack our little band of resolute men with a view to plundering the camp. To pack up lines and portfolio was the work of an instant, and hurrying toward the camp, I arrived breathless and panting with fatigue in time to get the last glimpses of the cause of this uproar in the shape of a *lancha* gliding quickly down the river. It seems that the boatmen, delighted with the presence of the beloved Chieftain of the Llanos, immediately recurred to the usual way of expressing their enthusiasm, whether in peace or war, through the means of the all-potent gunpowder. In the afternoon of the same day a detachment of horse, composed for the most part of citizens from Calabozo,

arrived at the pass to invite the general to their city, and to offer him protection, in case of need, from the band of desperadoes above mentioned; these had already been bold enough to attack the prison guard of Calabozo, with the object of carrying off one of its inmates, a prominent citizen of the place who had been implicated in the robbery of a large drove of mules. Although it was currently reported that his two sons were the perpetrators of this unworthy act, yet, the fact that the animals were found on his estate, and his stout refusal to implicate his sons, made him responsible for the robbery; he was therefore incarcerated and his trial had commenced when his sons, adding sedition to theft, attacked the prison during the night with a band of peons from their own and other cattle estates. The result was most disastrous to the assailants; one of the sons having been badly wounded in the strife was taken prisoner and shot in the public square; while the other forfeited his life soon after during the vigorous persecution undertaken by the citizens against his band. Yet, this handful of men, badly armed and without leaders, but with a wide field of forest and savannas for retreat, and plenty of cattle for subsistence, continued for a long time to engage the serious attention of the government; and finally, when the following revolution broke out, they formed the nucleus around which the rebel party mustered very strong. In this manner many depredators not only evade the punishment of justice for their crimes, but eventually rise in importance, and even become leading spirits in the land where the laws are powerless in repressing their excesses.

With this encouraging prospect before us, we bade adieu to the gay brunettes of La Portuguesa and took the straightest route to Calabozo, across the great *estero* or swamp of Camaguan. An entire day was spent in wading through this refreshing transit route, which, owing to the increasing rise of the river, had already acquired the aspect of a broad lake. Our horses were most of the time immersed in the water up to the saddle girths, and few of them escaped total submersion, wherever there were any depressions of the ground. Many of the baggage mules especially, having no rider to guide them, lost their footing and rolled in the water, to the great discomfort of those who had any articles of apparel in their loads. Toward the afternoon we emerged from this dismal swamp and made a landing at a place called Banco Largo, celebrated in the annals of the horse epidemic as the cattle estate upon which the wrath of Heaven fell after the blasphemous boasting of its owner.

We were beginning to appreciate the comfort of riding again upon firm ground, when we observed a group of horsemen emerging from the palmar on our right, galloping in the direction of our scouts, as if threatening to cut them off. Fearing lest they might be the band of robbers whom we had every reason to suspect of evil intentions, we put spurs to our horses in hot chase of them. Mistaking us in turn for those gentry, the strangers pushed on ahead of us to evade our pursuit. Our scouts observing their retreat cut off by a larger force, were not slow in their endeavors to reach the farm-house, where they could defend themselves against the supposed robbers until we

could come up to their assistance. The suspected party being mounted on fresh horses, we found it difficult, however, to overtake them. Fortunately one of their horses stumbled accidentally in a hole, throwing down the rider, which circumstance placed him in our hands; from him we ascertained that they were not *salteadores*, but *vaqueros* from a neighboring cattle farm, whom the annoyances of the *mosquilla* had compelled to ride through the palmar at robber's speed. His companions observing that we permitted him to depart in peace, now slackened their pace, and had their fears dispelled before they could carry the alarm to other places that the *salteadores* were close at hand.

At Venegas, a cattle State not far from Calabozo, we parted company with our herds, abandoning their care and guidance to the efficient caporals, while we proceeded direct to the Palmyra of the Llanos, always escorted by the citizen-guard who had come so far to meet us. Another deputation from the city, composed of the most prominent persons in the place, met us at the pass of the Guárico, and after a few congratulatory compliments, we rode on without stopping until we reached the village of the Mision de Abajo. Here we remained long enough to change our wet garments and partake of a collation prepared at the summer residence of an old soldier of Independence. This village is famous on account of several crystalline springs issuing from deep gullies made by the water on a hard conglomerate composed of sand, pebbles, and nodules of beautiful agates; the whole cemented together by a calcareous substance, consisting probably

of minute shells of infusoria.* Some of the pools measure several fathoms in depth; yet the water is so transparent, that the smallest pebble can be clearly discerned at the bottom; I also noticed many small fish. These sparkling natural fountains were shaded by groves of balsamiferous plants, such as copaiferas, amyris, and carob-trees, the dark foliage of which was relieved by a carpet of green grass extending for miles around, the whole presenting an appearance of a well-cultivated and beautifully laid out English park. Thither resort, during the sultry months of summer, the inhabitants of Calabozo, who now came out in vast numbers to welcome us to their beautiful city.

The procession was formed on the extensive natural lawn, three miles in length, between the village and the city, which rose in the distance amidst the towering foliage of the fan-palms surrounding it in oriental magnificence. As we entered the narrow, but cleanly streets, the firing of muskets, pistols, and blunderbusses commenced amidst the *vivas* of the population, while a shower of roses fell on the favored head of the "Lion of the Llanos," † as he passed under the windows of the houses.

The city of Calabozo, capital of the province of El Guárico, is situated upon the northern extremity of the *mesa* or plateau of the same name, command-

* See Darwin, Geology of the Pampas, pp. 129–171. Murray, 1852.

† Leon de los Llanos, or Leon de Payara—the appellation given to General Paez by the people after the action of San Juan de Payara in 1837, when he defeated with his body-guard of sixty Llaneros the forces of the rebel chieftain Farfan, numbering one thousand.

ing an extensive view of the picturesque country watered by the beautiful river which gives its name to the province. Unlike all the other towns of the Llanos, Calabozo is an extremely well-built city, with streets running at right angles. The houses are neat and commodious, ranking with the best in the capital of the republic. It contains a number of fine churches, one of which was built at the expense of a wealthy cattle proprietor of the place; it is one of the finest temples in the country.

Words cannot do justice to the enthusiastic reception and boundless hospitality extended to us on this occasion by the generous inhabitants. In addition to the regular entertainments, such as breakfast and dinner-parties, balls, and *fandangos* provided daily in their city residences, we were occasionally treated to a *fête champêtre, á la llanera*, in their *quintas* or country-houses. Most of these are situated on the banks of the beautiful Guárico, on the slopes of the plateau upon which the city is built; and there, amidst the most luxuriant groves of orange, lemon, and other tropical fruits, the abundant fare was served to us in true Llanero style. In the mean time the *trovatori* of the Llanos did not fail to enliven the scene with their never-ending *trovas llaneras*, in which especial mention was made of the most prominent persons to whom we were indebted for this munificent hospitality; but more particularly to the past deeds of the personage who prompted it. The broad fan-shaped leaves of the *moriche*-palm (Mauritia flexuosa)—the celebrated Tree of Life of the Warraoun Indians—supplied the most appropriate table-cloths on these

occasions, spread in the vicinity of some murmuring spring, issuing in most cases from the foot of the palm-trees. The natives believe that this plant possesses the power of pumping water from the ground by means of its matted roots: they evidently confound cause and effect in this, as well as in many other cases; for this luxuriant palm will not thrive except in moist ground. The slopes of the *mesa* acting as a vast drain to the plain above, offer this desideratum to the *moriche*-palm. Some of the springs are of a thermal character, but not too warm to prevent persons enjoying a most refreshing bath. I noticed, in one instance, two springs running side by side, one of which was cold and the other warm. The tide-flooded lands on the Lower Orinoco and Amazon rivers seem to be particularly adapted to the development of this noble* species of palm. "In those places," says Wallace,† "there is no underwood to break the view among interminable ranges of huge columnar trunks, rising unbroken by branch or leaf to the height of eighty or a hundred feet, a vast natural temple, which does not yield in grandeur and sublimity to those of Palmyra or Athens."

A full-grown leaf of this tree is quite a load for one man to carry. The petiole, or leaf-stock, is a solid beam ten or twelve feet long, while the leaf or fan itself measures nine or ten across. The fruit, in bunches of three hundred and upward, perfectly resembles the cones of the white pine. When arrived at

* Linneus, in his enthusiasm for the splendid family of palms, calls them the princes of the vegetable kingdom.

† Palms of the Amazon and Rio Negro.

its maturity, it is yellow within and scarlet without, covered with scales.

The benefits of this life-supporting tree may be reckoned as numerous as the number of days in the year. From the unopened leaves the wild man of the forest obtains a fibre remarkable for its toughness, and which he twists into cordage for his bow-string and fishing tackle, or weaves it into elegant hammocks and aprons for himself and family; he also plats them neatly into mats and cloaks, and even sails for his canoe; when fully expanded, these leaves form the best thatch for his hut. From the terminal bud or inner layer of leaves, commonly styled the cabbage of the palm, the Indian procures a vegetable quite analogous to, and more tender and delicious than a similar production of the garden. The fruit in like manner affords a variety of alimentary substances, according to the season in which it is gathered, whether its saccharine pulp is fully mature, or whether it is in a green state. Like the plantain and the celebrated peach-palm of the Rio Negro, it is either eaten raw, when fully ripe, or roasted—in the latter case tasting very much like chestnuts. Soaked in water and allowed to ferment, it forms a pleasant drink somewhat resembling *pulque*. The ripe fruit also yields by boiling in water, an oil which is readily converted into soap by means of the ashes of a Clusia, (*quiripiti*.) "The spathe, too—a fibrous bag which envelops the fruit before maturity—is much valued by the Indian, furnishing him with an excellent and durable cloth. Taken off entire, it forms bags in which he keeps the red paint for his toilet, or the silk cotton for his ar-

rows, or he even stretches out the larger ones to make himself a cap, cunningly woven by nature without a seam or joining. When cut open longitudinally and pressed flat, it is used to preserve his delicate feather ornaments and gala dresses, which are kept in a chest of plaited palm-leaves between layers of smooth *bussú* cloth." * The trunk of the male tree contains a farinaceous meal, *yuruma*, resembling sago, and like the fecula of the tapioca-root, it is readily converted into bread by simply drying it on hot earthen plates. Allowed to rot in the stem, this meal gives birth to numerous fat worms, highly esteemed by Indian gourmands. Tapped near the base of the leaves, the trunk yields also an abundance of a sweet liquor, which, when fermented, forms one of the various kinds of palm-wines. Such are in substance some of the most useful products of this veritable tree of life, with which the existence of a rude people is as intimately connected, as that of civilized man is with the luxuries and comforts that surround his home. "When the Tamanacks," says Humboldt, "are asked how the human race survived the great deluge, the 'age of water' of the Mexicans, they say: 'a man and a woman saved themselves on a high mountain, called Tamanacu, situated on the banks of the Asiberu, and casting the fruit of the moriche-palm, they saw the seeds contained in these fruits produce men and women who repeopled the earth.' Thus we find in all its simplicity, among nations now in a savage state, a tradition which the Greeks embellished with all the charms of imagination."

* Wallace, Palms of the Amazon and Rio Negro.

To protect themselves from the attacks of mosquitoes and wild beasts, the tribes roaming over the great delta of the Orinoco, are in the habit of raising between the huge trunks of the palm-trees hanging platforms skilfully interwoven with the foliage, which allow them to live in the trees like monkeys. The floor of these aërial habitations is covered with a coating of mud, on which the fires for household purposes are made. Thus when the first explorers of the Orinoco River penetrated for the first time into that exuberant *terra incognita*, they were surprised to observe, among the tops of the palm-trees, flames issuing at night as if suspended in the air. "The Guaranis still owe the preservation of their physical, and perhaps their moral independence, to the half-submerged, marshy soil over which they roam with a light and rapid step, and to their elevated dwellings in the trees, a habitation never likely to be chosen from motives of religious enthusiasm by an American Stylites." *

I also met for the first time at Calabozo with the most splendid rose-bush, or rather tree, I had ever seen, and which appears to be indigenous to that hot region, as I am told that the same grows in great luxuriance at San Fernando and Ciudad Bolívar, but was unknown to the rest of the country previous to our visit to the Llanos. Being passionately fond of flowers myself, I did not neglect to bring along with me this beautiful new variety to our home in the Valleys of Aragua, where it soon displayed its count-

* The followers of a sect founded in Syria by the fanatical pillar-saint, Simeon Sinanites.—HUMBOLDT.

less blossoms to the admiring gaze of the passers by. From thence it was also carried by me to Caracas, where it soon became the general favorite of the fair dames of the Capital, who by unanimous accord named it, not as might be supposed after the introducer, but after his father, with which the former was equally well satisfied; and certainly no more beautiful compliment could have been paid their favorite champion, than by associating his name with the acknowledged Queen of Beauty among flowers. The size attained by this plant surpasses any thing of the kind with which I am acquainted. When favored by a dry and hot climate like that of Calabozo, its shoots attain a height of fifteen to twenty feet with a corresponding thickness; so that a hammock with its usual load can be supported between two trees; and as these put out a great number of branches, each of them loaded with flowers or buds ready to expand, they present a sight truly splendid. A hundred blossoms may be plucked each morning of the year without marring its luxuriant beauty. I have myself counted over one thousand buds on a single plant. These flowers are of a delicate pink color, with very regular petals of a deciduous nature; so that in detaching themselves from the calix, they cover the ground upon which the parent grows, with a rosy carpet.

"Sin flores y sin hermosas
Qué fuera de los mortales?
Bien habeis nacido, rosas,
Sobre el lodo de los males."

—Arolas.

TRANSLATION.

"Without beauty, without flowers,
What would be this world of ours?
Well, that e'en in misery dire
Find we roses 'mid the mire."

The truth of the above sentiment we soon realized; from this time a succession of misfortunes, commencing with a violent attack of fever which nearly carried us all to the grave, and ending with the destruction of our property and peaceful homes, followed one another without intermission.

The fever was doubtless induced by our previous exposure on the journey and subsequent dissipations at Calabozo, although the city itself is one of the healthiest spots in the republic. Unfortunately, our physician, who was blessed with a very jealous wife, had been summoned home by his better half on hearing of our approach to the fairy metropolis of the Llanos. However, there were two or three medical gentlemen in the place, and these, with the unremitting kindness and assistance of the ladies, managed to keep us alive until a skilful physician, who had been sent for, arrived from the Valleys of Aragua. The critical condition of our respected Leader and sire particularly gave them serious fears, as the fever in his case had commenced to assume a malignant character. Courier after courier was despatched across the miry plains to hasten the arrival of the doctor, while the generous inhabitants vied with each other in the anxious cares with which they surrounded the sick-bed of their beloved guest. Years have rolled on, and many changes have since taken place, both

in the affairs of the nation and in the fortunes of the subject of these remarks; yet, their love for the "Martyr of San Antonio," * far from diminishing, seems to have increased during his protracted exile; for, as I write these lines, a petition addressed to the actual President of the republic demanding his recall, and signed by all the inhabitants of Calabozo, has come to hand, protesting in the strongest terms against the impolicy and injustice of leaving him still in exile when the nation most needs his counsel and influence. Justly deprecating the horrors of civil war and the want of unity which have existed in the republic since the downfall of the Monagas party, the petitioners conclude with this feeling outburst of patriotic solicitude for the absence of their favorite champion: "From the far-off shores of the Arauca, to the sources of our own Guárico, our anxious horsemen watch incessantly the far horizon, inquire from the passing breezes of the destinies of the Hero, who has condemned himself to voluntary exile, and then exclaim with a sigh: 'Were he again to lead us on to battle, Victory would be forthcoming, strengthened by Peace, and blessed by the vanquished.'"

* *San Antonio*, an old castle in Cumaná, where General Paez was kept in durance for nine months by the late ruler of Venezuela, General José T. Monagas.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CARACAS.

When sufficiently convalescent to proceed on our journey, we left Calabozo for the Valleys escorted by every man who had a horse to carry him. At Morrocoyes we parted company with our numerous retinue, and hastened home before the fever should reappear, as is often the case; and indeed, no sooner had we recovered in some measure the fatigue of the journey, than this terrible scourge again attacked us with renewed violence. Our leader especially was so prostrated by it, that little hope was entertained of his recovery. He survived, however, to be recalled to the field in consequence of serious disturbances occasioned by that bone of contention in our unhappy republics—Presidential elections. The *Guzmancistas* or followers of Guzman—the ambitious politician already alluded to—fearing to risk the constitutional elections, resolved to carry them by force. With this object, Guzman collected in Caracas an immense rabble at the head of which he marched toward Mar-

acay, ostensibly upon some trifling pretext, but actually in the hope of first securing the person of the General, and then joining some scattered bands across the lake. I have mentioned (in the fourth chapter of this narrative) how he succeeded in enticing the lower classes to join him by false promises of rewards in the shape of bounty lands at the expense of the industrious few who did not side with him. Remission of old scores of debts, pending judgments for various crimes and the freedom of the slaves, were included in his grand programme.

We were at dinner in the plantation when the General received a government despatch appointing him to the command of the army, but this being a myth, no standing force of any account existing in Venezuela previous to these troubles, the General-in-Chief mustered again his late band of devoted attendants and a few friends from Maracay, who rallied round him on hearing of the approaching phalanx of Guzmancistas. The appointment did not arrive an hour too soon; for, as we were engaged in answering the despatches, information was received of a large force of negroes descending on the Valleys from the mountains called La Sierra across the lake.

Though still enfeebled by our late illness, we were compelled to march all night under a drenching rain and through mud reaching to our horses' bellies, in search of the marauders, who had already been repulsed from Villa de Cura. We met them at the village of Magdaleno, whence we dislodged them after a sharp engagement. General Paez very narrowly escaped a shot from a blunderbuss fired so closely

upon him, as to sprinkle his blouse with the unburned powder. The swiftness of his horse, which dashed forward at the moment, saved his rider from perhaps an untimely death. Protected by the mountains, the insurgents collected again in a few weeks, and descending on the plains, tried their fortunes against Calabozo, but were met by the citizens at a place called Limon, near San Pablo, and totally routed. We arrived shortly afterward in time to assist in their dispersion, and succeeded in securing some of the leaders, among others the famous José Urbano, already mentioned. Guzman and his formidable rabble, in the mean time, considering discretion the better part of valor, concluded to postpone their threatened attack on the *oligarcas* of Maracay, and returned to that hotbed of sedition and revolution, Caracas, to await their opportunity. The government, however, as a precautionary measure, and with abundant proofs of their criminality, ordered the arrest of the most prominent ringleaders, whereupon all fears of an outbreak at the capital were dispelled. But it was soon discovered that the insurrection had its ramifications in various parts of the province, especially among the wild regions of the east, bordering the plains of Barcelona. For the suppression of this faction, General José T. Monagas, for a long time the *bête noire* of that section, was appointed second in command of the army; and such was the energy displayed by him on the occasion, that he captured and executed in a few days the greater part of his opponents. On the other hand, the General-in-Chief, finding no more enemies to conquer, freed all

his prisoners, excepting the leaders, who were reserved for trial by the proper authorities, and returned to his home in the Valleys of Aragua. Strenuous efforts had been made by his friends during his absence to secure his election to the Presidency, although he had repeatedly manifested through the press and in his private correspondence his unwillingness to serve for a third period. Finding, however, that his fellow-citizens still persisted in their efforts, he decided to quit his country, that he might be thereby disqualified for office. On this decision becoming known, it was finally agreed to elect Monagas, then at Barcelona, and we proceeded to Caracas for the purpose of receiving him.

The elevation of this individual to the Presidency of the Republic, although he had only figured until then as a guerilla chief and the sworn enemy of constitutional rights, was considered at the time a stroke of policy, hoping thus to satisfy his grasping ambition, which had ever aspired to the chief place of the nation. How he acquitted himself in his new trust, the murdered members of the Congress which elevated him will show.

We arrived in the capital amidst the greatest manifestations of popular favor and respect to the General-in-Chief. The streets were crowded with people of all parties and conditions. The loveliest ladies were deputed to present crowns of laurel to our Leader, while from the windows and balconies hung garlands and festoons of the most exquisite flowers, and banners inscribed with appropriate mottoes and devices. Every street corner was spanned

by triumphal arches, tastefully decorated with flags and allegorical paintings, among them the portraits of Bolívar and Paez were conspicuous. The air resounded with the acclamations of the populace and the bursting of rockets fired almost from under our horses' feet, while so densely crowded were the streets, as to render our progress through them all but impossible. Yet the same multitude which then shouted its enthusiastic *vivas* to "the disinterested patriot," a year later demanded his head from the tyrant Monagas. . . . .

A splendid collation had been prepared by the citizens of Caracas in the spacious corridors of the General's house, while the cellars were stocked with the choicest wines and delicacies. It was well understood throughout the city that Monagas and his troop of demi-savages—still at Barcelona plotting the ruin of the republic—were to be the guests of General Paez until a suitable house was prepared for them. However, the new President delayed his coming, and this delay was the more ominous, from the fact that the country was yet in a very unsettled condition. Many of the ringleaders in the late insurrection were still at large, and the gang of La Sierra had again shown itself in great force led by Rangel, a bold half-breed, once the follower of Cisneros, another Indian bandit, who, under pretence of fighting for Spain, had held the neighborhood of Caracas in terror during eleven years. But, as is often the case in countries involved in civil war, the tables were now turned, and this former terror of the mountains became the most efficient instrument in the suppression of the lawless

hordes then roving the inaccessible mountain passes of La Sierra. He was accordingly intrusted by the General-in-Chief with their extermination, although it must be confessed he occasionally evinced a somewhat dangerous partiality to his old ally, Rangel—while we remained at Caracas awaiting from day to day the advent of the future renegade, Monagas.

The manner in which the savage Indian chief was converted from a merciless brigand into a submissive slave of General Paez's will is rather singular, and therefore I may be permitted to give it place among these Wild Scenes. Although the power of Spain, under whose banner he claimed to wage a fierce war against society, had been *non est* in Venezuela for many years, he continued to harass the best troops in the republic during all that time, until General Paez, finding it impossible to capture him by force, endeavored to subdue him by gentle dealing. A son of the bandit, a lad of seven or eight years, had been captured by the troops and sent as a trophy to the General. The little savage was so wild, that no one dared to approach him: his teeth and claws, for such seemed his long and sharp-nailed fingers, would have torn in a moment the friendly hand extended to caress or touch him; therefore his baptism, until then neglected, was postponed till he became more tractable. The General himself stood his godfather, and one of the ladies in the family as godmother. The little Christianized savage was now sent to boarding-school in company with the other children of his godfather, and treated in all respects as one of them. When intelligence of his son's good fortune reached

the ears of Cisneros, who had hitherto supposed him dead, the old bandit was so moved that he sent a letter of thanks by one of his wives to his *compadre*, protesting nevertheless his determination to continue faithful to His Majesty of Spain. General Paez improved this opportunity to propose an interview in whatever place or manner most agreeable to Cisneros. At first a downright refusal was returned, he suspecting treachery even from a *compadre*, which relation is in some sort a sacred bond between parents and godfather: he could not comprehend why a man in the position of the General should trust himself among savages, having no other motive than the pleasure of an interview. A second invitation was tendered him through some women emissaries—no man venturing to penetrate his camp—and this time with better results; he consented to the interview, but with the express condition that the General should find his way *alone* to the bandit's haunts in the mountains of Tuy, south of Caracas. The undertaking was a most hazardous one, but there was no help for it. Thither the General directed his course, notwithstanding the most strenuous opposition, not only on the part of his family, but also from the entire population. A number of gentlemen escorted him as far as the entrance to the forest, where they remained anxiously awaiting the issue. Following the route marked out in the letter of instructions sent to him, the General waded through the forest until he was stopped by a dismal *Quien vive?* from one of the sentries. The challenge being satisfactorily answered, he was directed to proceed forward. Another *Quien vive?* made him con-

scious of a long file of savage soldiers, with guns levelled at his head. Onward he went, expecting each moment to hear the word *fuego!* (fire;) but, to his great surprise, not a word more was uttered until he reached the head-quarters of the chief, under a large ceiba tree. From the renown and prowess of Cisneros, the General expected to behold a powerful Indian warrior, surrounded by a staff of equally athletic men. What was his wonder and disappointment to perceive a puny creature, his face nearly concealed under a mass of dangling hair, advancing toward him! His voice, too, was so shrill and effeminate, that the General could not but in his turn suspect some knavery. He observed, however, that this caricature of a man carried in his hand in lieu of a peace pipe, a formidable blunderbuss, widely known throughout the country, and which, from its size, no other than Cisneros would have ventured to fire. No further introduction was needed; so, extending his arms toward the stranger, the General embraced his *compadre*, blunderbuss and all. Notwithstanding this cordial demonstration of friendship, the bandit appeared rather shy or covetous of the silver-mounted sword hanging at his guest's side, which the General perceiving, immediately despoiled himself of, and presented to his *compadre* with another embrace. The temptation was too great. Casting all reserve aside, Cisneros laid his blunderbuss against the tree and invited his *compadre* to sit beside him in his own hammock. The General, now exerting all his tact, endeavored to persuade the stubborn bandit to abandon his career of crime for the less hazardous pursuits

of civilized communities; offering in the name of the republic to continue him in the rank and pay of Colonel, the same grade he then held in the service of Spain. To this Cisneros replied that he had sworn fealty to the King his master, and therefore could not hear of any proposition to betray the confidence reposed in him. Without committing himself in the least, he finally consented to accept an invitation from the General to return the visit at some future day, which he did, a fortnight later, escorted by his whole band of savages. He would not, however, advance beyond the village of El Valle, three miles from Caracas. Thither the curious people of the capital hastened in crowds, attracted by the fame of the strange guest, who, finally, was so captivated by the universal cordiality of his reception, that he concluded to remain, accepting the reiterated proposals tendered him by the General. He then disbanded his body guard of four hundred Indian soldiers, all of whom were retained in the service of Government, and betook himself to the raising of cattle after the example of his *compadre*, who advanced him the requisite number of heads to establish a *fundacion* in the Indian village of Camatagua. *La cabra tira al monte*, says the proverb, which may be rendered, "the dog will return to his bone." Poor Cisneros, after doing good service in ridding the country of marauders, thus retrieving, in some measure, his past misdeeds, became at last suspected of conniving at the escapes of his former comrade, Rangel; so much so that the General-in-Chief found it necessary to dispossess him of his command, summoning him to his head-quarters

at Villa de Cura, whither he returned for this object. One night, while the General was conversing with two of his staff in the corridor of a lonely house where he was stopping just beyond the town, Cisneros, blunderbuss and sword in hand, appeared suddenly before him. Immediately suspecting treachery, the General advanced toward him and inquired, "Why are you here?"—"I come," Cisneros coolly replied, "to demand the cause of my removal." Said the General, "Are you alone?"—"My men are there,"—quickly retorted Cisneros, pointing to an open field in the rear. Even as he spoke, the General snatched the sword and blunderbuss from the astonished *guerrillero*, and ordering one of the officers to put him immediately in irons, directed the other to go in search of the men and conduct them to the barracks.

Further investigation showed that Cisneros, displeased at being superseded in his command by a Lieutenant-Colonel, called upon his men to follow him, an invitation which was readily complied with by one-third of them at least; and many more would doubtless have followed, had it not been for the prompt decision of that officer, who ordered back the rest—warning them of the danger they incurred in thus disobeying the orders of the General-in-Chief. Escorted by the recreants, Cisneros then made his way down to Villa de Cura, which place he approached stealthily under cover of night.

A council of war was ordered for the next day, and the evidence of his guilt being furnished by himself, he was condemned to be shot as soon as the sen-

tence should be approved by the higher authority. In the mean time, Cisneros, believing firmly that all this was only gotten up by his *compadre* to frighten others, did not manifest the least concern as to the issue. He alleged that some, more criminal than himself in inciting the insurrection, were at large in the capital and other places, and therefore he had nothing to fear. Contrary to his expectations, however, when the sentence was returned he found that the General had ordered his execution. Still Cisneros, impressed with the sacred nature of the bond existing between him and the General-in-Chief, could not be convinced that he would be shot; but when finally conducted to the place of execution, he became very submissive, and demanding permission to speak, addressed the crowd assembled in the plaza, protesting his innocence of the charge of treason imputed to him, although he acknowledged that this was but the just reward of his former crimes.

A few days later, the body also of Rangel, pierced with bullets and thrown across the back of a donkey, was brought in, he having been tracked in the forest and shot by an expert mountaineer, after a defeat sustained from the government forces at Pagüito.

All fears of further insurrection being now dispelled, we turned our steps toward the capital, where we arrived in season to comply with the request of Monagas, that General Paez should be the first to welcome him at the wharf of La Guaira.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MONAGAS.

A WHOLE month elapsed between the election of Monagas and his arrival at La Guaira, whither the General-in-Chief went to meet him. Preparatory to his public reception in the capital, I received instructions from head-quarters to have a *dejeuner à la fourchette* prepared at Catia, a hamlet near Caracas. There I met for the first time this "Tiger of the East," as he was appropriately styled, and his troop of blood-hounds. Among these the most conspicuous were his brother José Gregorio, also a General, and the famous Juan Sotillo, whom I have already introduced to the reader's acquaintance in a former chapter.

Excepting a habit of never meeting the person's eye with whom he is conversing, the elder Monagas has a most commanding appearance, being over six feet in height, and possesses features expressive of great determination. Although he had already attained the advanced age of sixty-two years, he scarcely represented fifty at most, having black glossy hair and moustache.

But notwithstanding these advantages, his *personnel* seemed not to produce a favorable impression upon the people who came to receive him; for, as the procession moved through the streets, the acclamations of the multitude were mostly directed to the General-in-Chief beside him, a circumstance we all regretted exceedingly, and from which he seems to have taken mortal offence. A characteristic incident occurred during the procession among the followers of the new President, which elicited much merriment. As the cavalcade entered the streets of the capital, Juan Sotillo rode up to José Gregorio, and passing his arm through that of his foster-brother, the two proceeded along through the procession apparently greatly satisfied of their own gallantry. It was well known in the capital that the two Llaneros were *uña y carne*, *i. e.* blackguards both; and indeed, if we are to judge the former by the spelling of his own signature, which instead of Sotillo reads *Sopillo*, (confirmed villain,) no doubt could be entertained respecting the character of one of them at least.

The cavalcade, after marching along the *Calle del Comercio*, alighted, as had been arranged, at the house of the General-in-Chief, situated at the end of the street. Matters progressed very pleasantly with our guests for about a month, when they removed to their new residence. Several splendid balls and bull fights provided by the citizens were given in honor of the strangers, when it was observed that the President, although extremely partial to the latter, declined attending both. The mission of our Leader being now accomplished, we returned to Maracay, expecting to

recruit from our fatigues in that quiet little town. But even there our repose was interrupted by various reports reaching us almost daily respecting the misdoings of the new President. His entire cabinet, composed of high-minded men, disgusted with his perfidious conduct, soon resigned and retired into private life, thus leaving the fate of the republic in the hands of an unscrupulous ruler. The perverse adherents of Guzman, who had suffered the most from him while in command of the army of the East, were now the first to surround and lavish upon him the basest flattery for the purpose of gaining him over to their party. Guzman, still in prison undergoing his trial for riot and sedition, was immediately set free by Monagas; while Blas Bruzual, the leader of the so-called liberal party, became at once his confidential adviser. A year later, these two unprincipled demagogues, who then held high offices in the state, very nearly lost their heads at the hands of one of the myrmidons of the despot for expressing sentiments derogatory to his administration.

In a word, I will state that soon after his installation in the Executive power, Monagas commenced subverting the constitution of Venezuela, and surrounded himself with all those who had in former years openly waged war against the fundamental law. He removed all the officers and commanders of the militia, and substituted his own partisans; refused to appoint as Governors of provinces the persons nominated according to law, and placed in their stead his own creatures. He collected and took possession of all arms belonging to the State, and gave them into

the hands of his followers, disarmed the active or regular militia, and called into service the paid militia, or militia of reserve, without the authority of law as required by the constitution. He also excited and encouraged dissension and jealousy between the different classes of the community. The result of all these acts was, that articles of impeachment were presented against him in the House of Representatives in the manner provided by the constitution; but on the 24th of January, 1848, as the House was proceeding to take into consideration the accusation, the militia of reserve, called into service by Monagas, officered and paid by him, attacked the House and fired upon the representatives of the people; a scene of bloodshed and slaughter ensued; eleven members and other citizens were murdered, among the former the distinguished statesman, Santos Michelena; but notwithstanding that Monagas had especially commanded his myrmidons to bring him the heads of five other prominent members, viz., Hermenegildo Garcia, P. J. Rojas, J. V. Gonsalez, J. M. Rojas, and Simon Camacho, strange to relate, not one fell into their hands, and, with the exception of the two first, are now living to rejoice in the downfall of their would-be butcher. The House of Representatives was deserted, and the members fled in consternation to their homes; several found refuge in the various foreign legations at the capital, whence they, along with several others, were dragged the next day into the House and compelled to pass a general amnesty in favor of all concerned in the bloody tragedy. I was in Caracas at the time, making preparations to embark for

the West Indies with some members of my family, and can bear testimony to the abominations of this modern St. Bartholomew. The house of the generous French Chargé, Monsieur David, whose guests we then were, presented a scene which I shudder to describe. Monsieur David, who had witnessed the horrors of the Greek war for independence, declared that these scenes reminded him of similar ones enacted by the Turks in the Grecian Archipelago. But this was only in keeping with the deed which gained Monagas his appellation of "Tiger of the East," when, treacherously introducing himself in an Indian village, and inviting the inhabitants to assemble in the church, under pretence of bestowing rewards in the name of the Spaniards whom they served, he closed the doors and fired the building. As the poor wretches in the extremity of their despair endeavored to spring from the windows, they were caught upon the lances of their foes and brutally massacred. Thus Monagas annihilated an entire village, sparing neither age nor sex, and this under the plea of avenging some atrocities which had actually been perpetrated by Spaniards in his own camp.

This total subversion of law produced great consternation throughout the republic. The people turned again to Paez and reminded him of his promises to stand by them and protect their liberties. Several towns and provinces declared against the usurpation of Monagas, and called upon Paez to restore the constitution. Convinced in my own mind that he would respond to this call as soon as the news

of the catastrophe should reach him, I made strenuous efforts to depart for Curaçao, all the avenues to the interior being closely guarded by the partisans of Monagas. Notwithstanding the promise he had given us only the previous day, to the effect that he would grant whatever request we might see fit to ask of him, when applied to for our passports, demurred, his plea being that such a step on our part would, abroad, bring discredit on his government! He also tried in vain to induce our removal from the protection of the French Legation to his own house, doubtless in anticipation of some aggressive movement on the part of our Leader, then on his way to New Granada, the inhabitants of our sister republic having tendered him an invitation to visit them. We, persisting in our first determination, were at length permitted to leave for La Guaira, escorted by an aide-de-camp of Monagas, just one day before the news reached the capital that General Paez was in arms against the tyrant.

On the 4th of February we embarked on board a Dutch schooner for the peaceful island of Curaçao, to the northwest of La Guaira. Sped by the trade-wind and current, we descried on the morning of the 5th the red roofs of the quaint old town of Willemstadt, capital of the island, and the two splendid forts commanding the harbor's entrance. An hour or two more "before the wind," brought our swift craft within its tranquil waters, where we were soon surrounded by a fleet of clumsy punts, manned by as ragged and vociferous a set of negroes as ever shone under a tropical sun. With one hand upon the long

oar by which they propelled and steered at the same time their boats, with the other they endeavored to direct our attention to themselves, almost bewildering us with their cosmopolitan patois; now offering to transport our persons and chattels in their *ponches* for only one *placa*, about one cent; now extolling the merits of their employer's hotel or boarding-house, none of these, however, remarkable for cleanliness or comfort.

On the wharf of Punda, a suburb of the town devoted to business and the goddess Cloacina, we were met by a crowd of more familiar faces, composed of other refugees from our unhappy country, who had succeeded in evading the vigilance of guards stationed on all the roads leading to the seacoast as well as to the interior, and now accosted us with anxious glances and inquiries respecting the fate of the beloved ones left behind. Among them we discovered the plump and honest face of many a Dutchman, who hastened to offer us those hospitable civilities so acceptable in a foreign land.

Finding the proximity of punt-drivers and fruit-venders none the most odorous, notwithstanding the display of delicious fruit that lined the wharves, and the accommodations at the hotel not so inviting as had been represented to us, we removed to La Otra Banda, by far the most decent quartier of the four into which the town is divided, where, for a comparatively small sum, we hired a furnished house.

I soon made myself familiar with the few points of attraction in the island; and having been favored with the sympathy and kind attentions of its inhab-

itants from the moment of our arrival, had abundant opportunities for visiting their beautiful country residences, embowered in groves of mango, tamarind, and other equally splendid fruit trees. Curaçao is justly celebrated in this respect, especially for its Sapodillas, (Achras sapota,) undoubtedly the finest in the tropics. The bergamot orange, from whose rind is distilled in Holland the delicious liqueur which bears the name of the island, also grows there in the greatest profusion.

There was so aristocratic an air of careful order about these rural retreats as to recall at every step the proverbial neatness of the mother country. Many of the farms are devoted to the raising of sheep and goats, including a few horned cattle; but the greater portion of the lands are occupied with plantations of the aloe socotrina and the cochineal cactus, from both of which Curaçao and its dependencies, Bonaire and Oruba, obtain a fine revenue. A large quantity of salt is also exported from those islands, which, to gether with large receipts of goat-skins from the neighboring Venezuelian province of Coro, contribute to maintain a brisk trade between Curaçao and the United States.

The island has an area of about one hundred and seventy miles; it is hilly in the interior, although not very high; the shores are bold and rocky, showing evident proofs of its coralline formation and subsequent elevation. It scarcely contains any water, and the soil is poor as a general thing, although the industrious inhabitants, of whom there are about fifteen thousand, make up for the deficiency in this respect.

A great portion of my time was employed at Curaçao in scanning from an eminence the distant horizon, in anxious expectation of some vessel from La Guaira bringing glad tidings of the tyrant's downfall, or at least something concerning the movements of our beloved Leader. Vain were our hopes; every new arrival was eagerly sought and questioned, only to learn that Monagas was daily reënforced with voluntary levies from the colored population, whom his satellites had no difficulty in persuading that unless they enlisted freely under his black banner, they would all be branded and *sold* by the "ambitious Paez" to the English! Of such stuff are often, alas! composed the armies raised in South America for the enslavement of higher intellect and constitutional rights. I may remark here, *en passant*, that far from aiming at the perpetuation of slavery in Venezuela, General Paez exerted himself, both as a magistrate and private individual, in accomplishing the gradual emancipation of the few still remaining in the republic, enacting laws to such effect during his administration, and giving freedom to all those in his possession whose good conduct and fidelity entitled them to that benefit. Yet, so successful were the agents of despotism in propagating those absurd notions, and so great the contagious effect of that base calumny, that it spread even to the miserable aloe-scented punt-drivers of Curaçao, whose insolence toward the refugees already required the intervention and assistance of the police on many occasions.

Tired at length of such uncertainty, and learning

that the forces of Maracaibo had occupied the province of Coro, I sailed for La Vela on the night of the 16th of March. Several other gentlemen, desirous like myself of sharing with the gallant *maracaiberos* the hardships of the first campaign for the reëstablishment of order, also accompanied me. The distance from Curaçao to the mainland being only thirty miles, we arrived at the open roadstead of La Vela before we were even aware of our approach to the coast. A more barren and desolate spot than this, I believe, does not exist even in Arabia Petrea. A few straggling houses in a state of decadence and misery, surrounded on all sides by prickly cactuses and acacias (*cujies*,) which constitute the principal sustenance of numerous flocks of goats raised here by the inhabitants, formed the *tout ensemble* of the oldest port in South America. We had some difficulty in finding any one from whom we could ascertain whether the place was still under the sway of EL GRANDE ASESINO, or under the auspices of *La Restauracion*.

With this discouraging prospect before us, and enlisting at once the services of some stray donkeys left behind as unserviceable by the retreating *monagueros*, we took the road leading to the capital, over an extensive quagmire or *salina* formed by the rising tides. A low range of moving sand hills, extending for several miles along the sea-shore, prevents the entire obliteration of the route.

Our donkeys behaved admirably, considering their emaciated condition and the spongy nature of the ground which, in addition to the sprinkling of sand

from the *médanos*, had imbibed sufficient salt water to render it almost impassable.

Another striking feature of the landscape we traversed, was the number and varieties of the cactus tribe growing there in society with the bristling *cujies*, (mimosa ternecina, negra, and others,) forming impenetrable thickets to any but the *corianos*, throughout the province. The pods of these mimosas afford excellent nourishment to the troops of mules and asses, as well as goats, constituting the principal wealth of the inhabitants; while the cactuses contain a watery sap sufficient to atone for the total want of springs in those barren flats. Upon one of them, four or five miles beyond La Vela, the ancient city of Coro, once the capital of Venezuela Proper, stands to the present day; neither the ravages of time—its existence dating from the year 1527—nor the descent of English freebooters in 1567, who captured it after a desperate assault; nor the devastating War of Independence, ending only with the almost total extermination of the inhabitants, having destroyed the very decided influence it still exerts over the destinies of the country at large.

Although the forces from Maracaibo, under the command of the noble-minded Piñango, encountered very little opposition from the Monagas party in Coro, additional reënforcements were despatched thither by sea from Caracas; these were landed in the eastern part of the province, too far off from Piñango's base of operations to guard against the advancing columns of the enemy. Still, Piñango had largely increased his army with additional levies from various parts of the province, and with these prepared to meet the

enemy on his own ground. Accordingly on the 3d of April he moved with his whole force toward La Vela, but had not proceeded further when he received intelligence that the enemy was rapidly advancing from an opposite direction. After deliberating on the best course, he determined to await his foe on the plain of La Vela, the approach to which was well covered by some war schooners just arrived from Maracaibo.

We remained two days at La Vela in hourly expectation of a brush with the enemy, who our scouts informed us was at Taratara, a hamlet not far from our camp, where, protected by an impenetrable barrier of cactuses and mimosas, and in greater numbers than we could oppose to them, they awaited our advance. Piñango, therefore, very wisely resolved to embark with his whole force for Maracaibo, but the commanders of the vessels refusing to receive his troops on board, he suddenly changed his tactics and gave the order to advance upon the enemy.

We had no difficulty in driving in their pickets toward Taratara, and shortly after the action became general. Unfortunately, the regiment detailed by Piñango to outflank the enemy became inextricably involved amidst the bristling cactuses, while their opponents poured murderous volleys upon them from behind some wooden fences, where they had intrenched themselves. Several of our best officers were either killed at once or mortally wounded; among the latter our lamented Chief, whom we were forced to leave behind in the flight that ensued. Happily the enemy, mistaking our movement for a feint, pursued us with only a small body of cavalry,

which, although keeping at a respectable distance, added to the confusion of our retreating soldiers. Very few of us were fortunate enough to gain the schooners with the help of the few boats at our disposal; the remainder were either dispersed or taken prisoners before they reached the beach.

Although poorly mounted, but well provided with an excellent double-barrelled gun, I succeeded after a hard ride in reaching the sea-shore, where I was picked up by a boat from a Dutch schooner at anchor in the bay, and transferred afterward to our flotilla. With me also escaped two brave commanders, General Muguerza and Colonel Minchin, both badly wounded; happily they recovered while at Maracaibo, for which place the vessels sailed that same evening, leaving numbers of our unfortunate companions to shift for themselves amidst the cruel woods of Coro.

Misfortunes never come singly. On our way to Maracaibo, I was confidentially informed by an officer of the staff that General Piñango's wish to withdraw from Coro was in consequence of a bulletin from Caracas, received by him at La Vela, announcing the startling fact that General Paez had been defeated in the plains of Apure. Although I at first did not attach much importance to a bulletin coming from the enemy, the sad intelligence was fully confirmed shortly after our arrival at Maracaibo, by an emissary from the General himself, informing the authorities of his retreat into New Granada. I then learned, for the first time, that, although quite unprepared for the unequal contest, he took the field with a few fol-

lowers at Calabozo, where he received the first information respecting the bloody tragedy at Caracas. His force was receiving daily additions with volunteers from various parts of the Llanos, when a traitor —Cornelio Muñoz—whom he had raised from the lowest station in life to the highest rank in the army, rebelled against him in the province of Apure, thus menacing his rear. To guard against this evil in time, the General set off immediately in that direction with the object of having an interview with Muñoz, or of attacking him before he should increase his force.

Unwilling to commence hostilities in the province of his especial solicitude, General Paez despatched at once a commissioner duly accredited to treat with Muñoz while he mustered his forces, consisting wholly of cavalry, on the plain of Cambero. Finding, however, that he could not come to terms with his ungrateful *compadre*—for, in addition to other favors from his benefactor, Muñoz had prevailed upon the General to stand as godfather to one of his children—he determined to attack him with his body-guard of tried Llaneros and a few squadrons from Calabozo. A gallant charge from the former soon broke the enemy's front, who fled in confusion across the plain; but before the cloud of dust raised by the horses had cleared, the regiments from Calabozo, seized with a sudden panic, fled in exactly the opposite direction to that taken by the retreating enemy. All the efforts of General Paez to arrest the flight were unavailing, they never stopping until close to the frontiers of New Granada.

On the other hand, the guard, after a successful

pursuit of several miles, when they lanced great numbers of their opponents, finding on their return no traces of the missing regiments and only dead bodies upon the field, were in their turn overwhelmed with panic, and likewise retreated into New Granada by another route.

Thus, from a victorious General, our Leader became, through the treachery or cowardice of one of his lieutenants, a wanderer in a strange land. The negotiations with Muñoz had been conducted by the commander of the forces from Calabozo, who stood in great fear of Múñoz; and it was rumored at the time that the latter had promised him full pardon in case of a defeat, providing he should desert his chief and friend in his hour of danger.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARACAIBO.

MONAGAS, now free from enemies in other parts of the republic, directed his whole energy and attention to the subjugation of Maracaibo, which, from her geographical situation and abundance of resources, offered a more formidable obstacle to his sway.

A glance at the map of Venezuela, will show a deep indentation of the coast toward the west, formed by the wild and still unsubdued peninsula of La Goajira,—exclusively inhabited by a warlike tribe of Indians—on the north, and the arid coast of Coro on the southeast. Into this wide gulf, usually termed Saco de Maracaibo, the largest lake in South America pours the tribute of a hundred navigable rivers and several minor streams. The entrance to the lake is extremely dangerous, on account of the many shoals and breakers that bar its mouth, while but a small portion of its eastern shores is accessible to an enemy seeking to invade the province by land, the rest being entirely surrounded by an impenetrable forest and pestiferous marshes, the haunts of the tapir, and

numerous herds of wild hogs. The only entrance to it from the sea, is through a narrow channel between dangerous shoals, in the west end of its mouth, where a fort mounting twelve guns can easily dispute the passage of a flotilla, such as are used in the republic. With the aid of good pilots, ships not exceeding eleven feet draught can cross the bar and intervening shoals between this point and Maracaibo, thirty-five miles inland.

Further on, the lake expands into a nearly circular basin, four hundred miles in circumference, navigable in all its extent by the largest craft afloat.

Although the news of the reverse of Taratara threw the people of this province into the greatest excitement for a time, the comparative security they felt under the protection of their little fleet of schooners—soon increased by the addition of a bark and several armed *piraguas*—finally quite restored the public tranquillity, and I had leisure to occupy myself with other objects than gunpowder.

It is not my intention to tire the reader, more than is absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of my task, with the recital of the miseries and tragedies incidental to civil war; my mission is simply to depict the natural features of my native country, avoiding the unnatural as much as possible. Therefore, let us now glance at the city and its environs, where sparkling eyes and loving hearts await our arrival to welcome us to their comfortable mansions; for hotels are rather a scarce commodity in Maracaibo, the generous hospitality of the inhabitants having thus far prevented their establishment.

The first object that attracts our attention on entering the bay, is a spacious custom-house fronting the water; near this stands also the market, profusely supplied with game, fish, and the finest beef in the country. There can be found also abundance of vegetables, raised on *barbacoas*, several feet from the ground, for the purpose of protecting the tender shoots from the depredations of red ants. Were this precaution neglected, the entire crop would disappear in a single night, the time usually chosen by these pernicious insects for their marauding excursions. Among the vegetables you cannot fail to notice the size and abundance of the plantains, a favorite food with the people of all classes. This vegetable being suspended sufficiently high from the ground by the parent plant, does not require man's protection against the ants, whose habits are decidedly terrestrial. Immense plantations of this delicious fruit, or vegetable, exist on the moist borders of the lake, along with its inseparable companion, the cacao-tree. As a substitute for soda water or iced lemonade in this burning climate, the intelligent *garçon* before the fruit-stands will present you for the asking the huge green husk of the cocoa-nut, filled with its refreshing sap, erroneously called milk. The tree producing it, is another of the peculiar features environing the lake, whose shores for more than forty miles are covered with a continuous plantation of this useful palm; from it the inhabitants obtain, besides wine, oil, milk, (from the kernel,) cabbage, thatch, timber, &c., &c.

Embowered in one of these *cocales*—cocoa-nut

plantations—the rural retreat of Los Haticos looms across the bay. This, as the name implies, is a collection of country houses, where the citizens spend great portions of their time in revelry and enjoyment. Some of the houses are roofed with red tiles, giving them a very pretty appearance amidst the dark foliage of the palms; but the greater part are thatched with *enea*, or flag-reed, unfortunately also used to a great extent in the city. During the merry nights of Christmas and other holidays, abundantly provided by our calendar, Los Haticos present a scene of bustle and gayety remarkable for good taste, sociability, and unostentatious hospitality. There, to the strains of the guitar, the harp and pianoforte, you may listen to as melodious voices as any that ever issued from enchanted groves. They proceed from the accomplished *Maracaiberas*, by far the most interesting feature of this province. If, fascinated by their charming voices, you are tempted the next morning to stroll through that little paradise of Spanish grace and beauty, you will behold these syrens of the lake, quietly seated under the shade of those stately palms, at work upon their famous laces, rivalling in fineness the spider's web. Their cottages are as open to strangers as the noble hearts of the fair occupants. Step in without ceremony, tired traveller, and witness henceforth to the excellency of the cup of chocolate speedily prepared for you by their hospitable hands, which, at the same time, offer also for your comfort a richly embroidered napkin of their own manufacture.

But as we shall have other opportunities to see more of them, we will take leave for the present of

these charming ladies of Maracaibo, and continue our ramble through the city.

As we sail to and from Los Haticos, you cannot fail to notice the immense number of *piraguas*, (flat-bottomed sailing boats having two masts and square sails,) which crowd the bay and the line of the horizon toward the south. These are the vehicles of transportation throughout this thrifty "Little Venice," or Venezuela proper, a name conferred upon it by the Italian navigator, Americus Vespuccius, who first braved the dangerous bar of Maracaibo. The borders of the lake being swampy and unhealthy, the aborigines of that epoch, as well as those of the present day, to escape the malignant fevers and clouds of hungry mosquitoes filling the air, built their habitations in the water on posts of lignum-vitæ, which in this province bears the appropriate name of iron-wood.

Crowds of roguish urchins—attracted by the loads of golden plantains on board some of the piraguas—are constantly diving around these, after the fruit thrown to them by the patrons, as otherwise these little depredators would speedily relieve them of the main part of their cargo. In this manner the young *Maracaiberos* acquire their astonishing proficiency in swimming, which, later in life, enables them to brave the dangers of their inland sea.

The piraguas are very useful for ascending the rivers of the interior, connecting the commercial metropolis of the lake with the agricultural provinces of Merida, Trujillo, and portions of New Granada. The two former send to Maracaibo for exportation, indigo,

coffee, cacao, pita fibre, sugar, honey, and delicious preserves. The fertile valleys of Cucuta in New Granada depend principally upon Maracaibo for goods of foreign manufacture, giving in return tobacco, coffee, cacao, and straw hats. Maracaibo exports, besides large quantities of dye-woods, copaiba, divi-divi, senna-leaves, and hides.

Among the shipping you will also observe many fine schooners and square-rigged vessels built from her own inexhaustible supply of everlasting-timber, the city furnishing besides the best sailors, as well as the "smartest" business men in the republic.

There is a naval academy in addition to a college and several public schools, where the youth receive excellent instructions in the primary branches of education. In this connection Depons observes: "The youth of Maracaibo are particularly favored by nature, the least elemental instruction being sufficient to develop their mental faculties, a proficiency not easily obtained in Europe without long study and excellent teachers."

The greatest anxiety prevailed among the people of Maracaibo for the arrival of General Paez, hourly expected from New Granada. A fine schooner was fitted up for his accommodation without loss of time, and despatched to the mouth of the river Catatumbo—the main channel of communication between Cucuta and the lake—to receive and conduct him to the city. A number of gentlemen were commissioned for this purpose, and I availed myself of the opportunity to partially explore that interesting region.

The distance from Maracaibo to the Catatumbo is about ninety miles, and the schooner made the run during the night, so that by early morning, we dropped anchor in the still waters of Congo bay. The spy-glass was constantly in use, examining every bongo that hove in sight, hoping as we did every moment to receive some tidings of our Leader's whereabouts. We knew that he was at Cucuta, making preparations for his voyage down the river; accordingly we waited from day to day, in constant expectation of his arrival. To our great disappointment we learned, twelve days afterward, that the enemy's guerillas were posted along the woody banks of the river, cutting off his communication with the lake, thus annihilating our cherished hopes and those of the whole province, which longed to receive him with open arms.

Meanwhile, I was not idle in procuring information respecting the natural curiosities of that region. Much of the day was occupied in rowing round the bay, and among the numerous channels between the alluvial islands, constantly forming at the mouths of tributary rivers. Immense quantities of drift-wood and water-lilies are brought down by these, and deposited in the shallow borders of the lake. The wild plantain—heliconia—and other hydropathic plants also take root there, and before many years have rolled by, not only the course of the rivers, but also the aspect of the scenery become changed. The stately mora—Maclura tinctoria—which, under the name of fustic, is largely shipped from Maracaibo to various parts of the world—invites to its gigantic

branches and luscious berries, troops of chattering monkeys and flocks of noisy macaws, whose brilliant plumage vies in richness with the various tints yielded by that celebrated tree.

Not even a foot of dry land could we find whereon to exercise our cramped limbs. Our excursions, therefore, were made mostly in the boats of the schooner, or by wading through the shallower parts of the bay, which were covered with fine sand. The water was so transparent, that we easily avoided the numerous sting-rays and saw-fish beneath its surface. I speared several young ones of the latter, almost as numerous as the sands of those extensive shoals, which led me to conclude that this was a breeding place for that curious

species of shark. "It attains a length of from twelve to fifteen feet, including the serrated rostrum from which its name is derived.

"This powerful weapon seems designed to compensate for the inadequacy of the ordinary maxillary teeth, which are usually small, obtuse, and insufficient to capture and kill the animals which form the food of this predatory shark. To remedy this, the fore part of the head and its cartilages are prolonged into a flattened plate, the length of which is nearly equal to one-third of the whole body; the edges being armed with formidable teeth that are never shed or renewed, but increase in size with the growth of the creature." *

Alligators of enormous size were equally abundant there, especially in the inlets of lagoons connected with the lake, waiting for prey. To these lagoons numbers of piraguas resort regularly to load with fish, which, salted, forms one of the principal articles of trade with Maracaibo. Near the anchorage of our schooner was a fisherman's cottage, raised on posts three feet above water like the Indian habitations. Its

* Sir J. Emerson Tennent.

owner, whose body was so spotted with coagulated blood from the bite of mosquitoes that it had lost its original hue, supplied us daily with fresh fish, receiving in exchange salt, tobacco, and aguardiente. I could not repress a sentiment of pity for the solitary inhabitant of those lonely swamps, and even ventured to advise a change of location, when, to my great surprise his disfigured countenance assuming a grin of evident compassion, he whispered close in my ear: "Should you ever wish to escape into New Granada, I can take you there in my canoe through channels only known to myself." I then little thought I should ever need to accept this invitation; so, offering him a segar, I contented myself instead, with a trip in his skiff to one of the neighboring islands after some wild pavas we heard tolling in the distance. I shot one of these, of a rich chocolate color, and quite as large as a turkey-hen, which it greatly resembles; hence its name. The swampy and tangled nature of the jungle prevented however further progress, and I returned to my cicerone's hut after a few ineffectual shots at the alligators. He related to me several wonderful stories about the *danta* or tapir, the river-horse of the New World, which from want of space I am compelled to omit. Subsequently, on my return to Maracaibo, I saw one of these animals quite tame at the house of Señor Casanova, one of the "merchant princes" of our "Little Venice," who had allotted a place, in the corridor of his own house, to that noble beast.

One night we were surprised by the most fearful storm within my experience. It seemed as though

the "windows of Heaven were opened," amidst the glare of lightning, the howling winds, and rolling thunder. The latter was especially terrific. The rain fell with such force as to tear away the awning which protected our nightly slumbers, our numbers being too great for the little cabin of the schooner. The danger from the lightning was greatly enhanced by the immediate proximity of a war vessel filled with gunpowder. The surface of the lake appeared at times like a vast sheet of fire, while the roaring of the storm contributed to render the scene awfully sublime. These thunder storms are very frequent at the extremity of the lake, where it rains almost incessantly during a large portion of the year. The great mass of vapors dispersed throughout the atmosphere, carried thither by the sea breezes, is doubtless the cause of this phenomenon. Alluding to the subject, Codazzi has, in his Geography of Venezuela, some noteworthy remarks: "In the regions where the Cat-

atumbo disembogues, storms accumulate more frequently, while the thunder and lightning often frighten the navigator there. It seems as if the electric fluid was also more concentrated in those localities, where a luminous phenomenon may be perceived every night, which, like a flash of lightning, illumines the atmosphere from time to time. Observed from the sea, the flash appears as though directly over the island of Toas, nearly in the meridian of the bar of Maracaibo; it passes over the mouth of the Catatumbo, and serves as a guide to mariners. Can it be caused by the exhalations of hydrogen gas* from the swamps, which occupy a vast area near the mouth of the Catatumbo?"

After impatiently awaiting there for more than a fortnight the advent of our Leader, desirous of joining him without further delay, I engaged a man to take me in his canoe up the river, despite the warnings of my comrades respecting the guerillas infesting its banks. I was not much encumbered by luggage, having lost every thing—*foin l'honneur*—at Taratara; therefore I had only to step from on board the schooner into the little craft alongside, bidding adieu to my friends the Commissioners, whom I promised to rejoin in a short time if not captured by the guerillas. A young man bound to Cucuta, bearing despatches from the Governor of Maracaibo to General Paez, joined me as I was leaving the schooner, and the sun shining powerfully at the time, we both crawled into the *carroza*, a sort of thatch awning five

* Carburetted hydrogen gas.—The Author.

feet long by half that number wide, in the stern of the canoe. This was to be our common apartment for the next twelve or fourteen days of river navigation.

We had not proceeded far, when the canoe grounded among a labyrinth of snags, near the mouth of the river, which the *patron* was endeavoring to reach by a short cut. To retrace our way would have been as unprofitable as the endeavor to force the canoe through the stockade that barred its progress; therefore we were politely requested by our Charon to lighten his barge by stepping overboard, which, considering the number of sting-rays and other angry dwellers of the waters lurking there, I regarded as a bad commencement for our journey. *Donde manda capitan, no manda marinero.** Having therefore no alternative between being stuck in the mud, or by the bones of the fish, we preferred to risk the latter, as the lesser evil of the two; so stumbling here and pulling there, we finally extricated the canoe with only the loss of half a day, which, aware of the reception awaiting us beyond the lake from the mosquitoes, we did not much regret.

Toward evening we commenced ascending the river, sometimes assisted by the canalete, where the current was not very strong, but usually by means of a pole hooked into the branches of trees skirting the banks. The vegetation was superb beyond description, the river being entirely hemmed in between walls of massive foliage. Occasionally we met float-

* Where the captain commands, sailors have no authority.

ing down stream, huge *balsas*, or rafts of timber, cut upon its banks and towed afterward to Maracaibo, by a long and circuitous route along the irregular shores of the lake.

So far, we had not been troubled by mosquitoes; but hardly did the shadows of night close upon the scene, than we were apprised of their vicinity, by a low humming sound proceeding from the forest, which, gradually approaching, occasioned us direful forebodings. The *patron* advised us to light our segars an hour or two before retiring to our narrow apartment, if we wished to escape their importunities. This, however, proved a poor expedient, as the entire night was spent in directing at our unseen enemies blows, from which, as a general thing, we ourselves were the only sufferers. In the sharper sting and loud triumphant song of many among them, I recognized my old acquaintances, the *pullones*. Add to these aggravations, a continuous drizzling rain upon our uncovered feet, which would project outside the carroza, and some idea may be formed of the torments we endured during that and the following night. I was revolving in my mind serious thoughts of abandoning my trip to New Granada, and returning to the lake by the first balsa floating down the stream, when, toward the morning of the third day, I heard the heavy stroke of oars against the sides of some bongo rapidly approaching from up the river. "Listen!" I exclaimed to my companion; "get your despatches ready to be pitched into the river, for I fear the *monagueros* are upon us." When within hailing distance, we gave the *qui vive*. A friendly

voice, which I immediately recognized as that of Roseliano, answered "Paez!" and a moment afterward, two huge bongoes full of men were alongside of our frail canoe. To pick up my bundle of segars, —actually the only remaining property I possessed in the world,—and jump on board one of them was the work of an instant. The passengers proved to be the faithful Llanero Guard, which had followed our Leader into New Granada; but my disappointment was great on learning from them that the General had abandoned the idea of coming to Maracaibo by this route, giving the preference to that of the Magdalena River, which, although much longer, would enable him to stop at Jamaica and other West India islands, before again confronting his old antagonist, Monagas.

We availed ourself of the opportunity offered by the bongoes to return to the lake, where—to the no small satisfaction of the crowded party on board them, we found the schooners still waiting for more definite information concerning the anxiously looked-for arrival of the General. All were transferred to the schooners without delay, and a fine land-breeze blowing at the time, we made all sail for Maracaibo, carrying thither the vexatious news of our unfulfilled commission. The low lands of Congo bay were soon lost sight of, and then the broad expanse of fresh water, heaving like the ocean, was all we saw. It blew and rained heavily through the night; but the next day the clouds lifted, affording us a distant view of the Sierra Nevada, rising in snowy peaks thousands of feet above the region of the clouds.

It would almost seem, from the fact of this vast body of water penetrating so far inland, that Providence had expressly designed it to bring into near proximity the sea-coast and the lands at the foot of the higher cordilleras of Merida and Trujillo, whose fertile slopes in the form of table-lands stretch to the borders of this splendid lake. So great are their extent and astonishing fertility, so numerous the navigable streams, by which they are watered, and various the climates in those regions, that time alone is wanting to render them the seat of a vast commerce. Between the lake and the sierras surrounding it, the people and products of Europe and America can find each their congenial temperature, from the burning heats of the tropics to the chilling frosts of winter, or the eternal snows of polar regions.

A dead calm, which fortunately, as we were already short of provisions, only lasted until sundown, succeeded the boisterous night; otherwise we would have fared rather poorly during the passage to Maracaibo, which place we reached toward morning.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GOAJIROS.

The arrival of our vessels in the harbor naturally attracted thither a great crowd of anxious friends in hopes to find there the one who, they trusted, would deliver them in the impending struggle that menaced from across the lake; for the enemy, who had already arrived at Altagracia, opposite Maracaibo, were known to be making preparations for crossing to La Goajira, and for marching thence by land to invade the province. The undertaking was, however, fraught with peril to the attacking forces, from the notorious hostility of the Indians and other formidable obstacles to be encountered along the route. Unfortunately, the greatest anarchy reigned at the time among our own people, who, finding no coöperation from their terrified leaders, already despaired of success in repelling the invaders. The disappointment therefore they experienced at not finding in our vessels the cherished object of their hopes, may be easily imagined. Men, wringing their hands, frantically paced the wharf in utter dejection of spirit, while the women

of all ranks, who have ever manifested a strong sympathy for the "Esclarecido,"—General Paez—sat down and wept bitter tears of disappointment beneath the grateful palms that surround their homes.

While wandering through the streets of the city, not knowing where to find an abiding place, I was politely accosted by several gentlemen, who, on hearing of my unfortunate mishap at Taratara, where I lost the little I had saved from the flame of revolution, hastened to offer me their homes and purses. I accepted the hospitality of Don Antonio Montiel, whose kindness on this occasion, as well as that of his estimable family, is still fresh in the memory of the exile. While there, I had an opportunity of witnessing the dreadful effects of the animal poison, used by the savages of La Goajira, and which I can only compare to the madness induced by hydrophobia.

My host, Don Antonio, owned a cattle-farm on the frontiers, not far from the fort of San Carlos, and while his men, four in number, were engaged in driving some tame animals to the corrals, a hidden host of red-skins issuing suddenly from the bushes, sent a shower of poisoned arrows amidst the drivers, killing one man instantly and wounding two more. Of these one was taken to the fort; the other, a slave of Señor Montiel, being sent to him at Maracaibo. Although the wound was a flesh one, his master at once gave the necessary orders for his approaching interment, as nothing could save him. The poor fellow appeared perfectly resigned, and answered all my questions with apparent unconcern. On the second day the poison manifested itself by occasional twitchings of

the nerves, which increased gradually to violent jerks of the whole frame, until death relieved the agonized sufferer.

There is no known antidote to this poison, except that of immediate cauterization, where the wound is not too deep. Aware of this, the vengeful Indian makes his arrow's tip of the bone of the sting-ray, notching it deeply in several places, so that it is sure to break off in the flesh, while the serrated edges prevent its extraction.

Señor Montiel, who for many years had traded with this savage tribe of Indians, and was well acquainted with their history and habits, gave me very interesting details concerning them and the concocting of this direful poison. The contents of the witches' caldron in "Macbeth" was a harmless drug in comparison with it. A number of dead reptiles, snakes, toads and lizards, with a sprinkling of centipedes, scorpions and tarantulas, are placed in a gourd and allowed to rot until they all, "like a hell broth, boil and bubble" into a yellowish liquid, which collects at the bottom of the gourd: in this, the points of the arrows are steeped, and then laid aside to dry.

The Goajiros are equally expert in the use of firearms, and being in addition most accomplished riders, they oppose a formidable barrier against the permanent occupation of their territory. They were perhaps the first inventors of conical balls, which they have been in the habit of manufacturing for themselves since they have become masters of the gun; and so expeditious are they in their management of it, that they can load and fire in less time than any

veteran soldiers opposed to them. This they effect by drilling wider the vent of the old flint muskets, the only ones then used in Venezuela, thus facilitating the run of the powder into the pan when the cartridge is introduced into the barrel, and the ball being heavier than that of their opponents, a blow upon the ground with the but-end of the musket while they fly swiftly around the enemy, is sufficient to load and prime it. They understand also that, by raising the muzzle of the gun, a longer range is attained—a practice which they may have derived from constant use of the bow and arrow. But from whom they acquired their scientific use of other weapons, was more than my friend Don Antonio could tell me.

The territory, or peninsula, occupied by the Goajiros, has long been the subject of disputes and reclamations between Venezuela and New Granada, lying, as it does, on the boundaries of both republics; and although the former only claims one half of it, while the other demands the lion's share, the fact is, that neither of them has reckoned upon the host there; nor have they exercised any jurisdiction beyond the forts established on the frontiers to check the forays of their savage neighbors. Indeed, it is a curious circumstance that, while all the other tribes of Indians have been subdued or exterminated in South America, neither the Araucanians or Patagonians inhabiting the extreme south, nor the Goajiros of the far north, have ever been conquered by the white race. Several steps were made at different times by Venezuela to subjugate the Goajiros; but with the exception of a temporary occupation of the ground held by the

soldiers of the republic, nothing was ever gained unless it be an increase of their hatred to the *orijunas*, as they call us.

The habits of these Indians are very curious. They live in communities of a certain number of families like the nomads of the desert, and like them roam over arid plains with their herds, pitching their camp wherever they find abundant food and water for the cattle, and moving off to another place only when the pastures are consumed. They possess the finest breed of cattle and horses and other domestic animals. The head of the nation was a squaw, Rosa by name, herself a splendid equestrian as well as archer. Each tribe, however, is under the immediate control of a cacique, who exercises a sort of patriarchal sway over all concerns of the country. The head of a family receives from him a portion of stock in trust, according to the number of individuals composing it. These are only entitled to the yield of the herds, the cacique reserving to himself the right of disposing at any time of those animals always commanding a good price in the market; they readily sell, or rather exchange them, on the frontiers under the surveillance of government officers, appointed expressly at the town of Sinamaica. This, however, does not prevent the white traders imposing upon the ignorance of their savage customers, who, being unacquainted with the use of money, dispose of their cattle for aguardiente, worthless trinkets, bridles, knives, cotton, woods and colored blankets, far below the value of what they give in exchange.

From the yarn of their blankets, pulled apart for the purpose, these Indians weave elegant scarfs and

other articles of dress, displaying their innate taste and ingenuity. The Goajiros do not go nude as is the practice among other South-American tribes, but rather pride themselves, especially the women, upon a profuse display of printed calico, the brightest that England's factories can produce. Their style of dress is exceedingly picturesque and unique. The men wear a sort of flowing blouse without sleeves, not unlike the dress of an ancient Roman warrior, tied around the waist by a long scarf, the ends of which fall gracefully on one side. When the weather is warm, the upper part of the dress is allowed to drop down over the sash, thus exposing their athletic shoulders to view. The chiefs wear, besides, a head-dress made from the bright feathers of the macaw-parrot, which adds greatly to their picturesqueness, especially when mounted on one of the spirited Goajiro horses. The latter are remarkable for fine training, elegant proportions and good mettle, and invariably command higher prices than those of any other breed in Venezuela. The training they receive must differ considerably from that usually practised in the country, as these noble creatures cannot brook the touch of spur or whip. Another distinguishing mark is the peculiar brand imprinted on their haunches in the form of geometrical figures, instead of the letters or hieroglyphics used in other portions of Venezuela.

Great numbers are annually exported from the peninsula, notwithstanding the reluctance of the Indians to part with their steeds; still the finest among them are seldom, if ever, permitted to go out of the territory, unless it be through some stratagem on the

part of the white traders who, to gain their ends, often resort to the disgraceful plan of thoroughly intoxicating the owner. It is probably owing to this manifest disinclination to part with their property, that the practice arose among the Indians of cutting off the ears of the best horses. When pressed very hard to sell one of these, the rider, without uttering a word, quietly dismounts and drawing the long knife which he carries in his belt, puts an end to the transaction by depriving the poor creature of those valuable appendages. "There! *orijuna* no like horse without ears!" the redskin exultingly exclaims; then, jumping upon the back of his mutilated steed, doubtless regretting that he had not done the same to the occasion of the transaction, resumes his dealings with the astonished trader, who, it is scarcely necessary to add, does not press the bargain further.

The Goajiros also trade largely with the English and Dutch of the West Indies, from whom they obtain more substantial commodities in the shape of flint muskets, powder and lead—articles of prime necessity among them, and which they cannot procure so easily from their neighbors. When a vessel drops anchor near the coast, the cacique of that district, accompanied by some members of his family, immediately proceeds in his canoe to welcome the strangers; but before entering into any negotiations, an exchange of hostages takes place. This is a custom of long standing among these savages, a custom which, to their credit be it acknowledged, has ever been held sacred by them in all dealings with the whites. But, a short time before the revolution, the reverse had been the

ease, on the part of those claiming to be their superiors in civilization and morality.

A schooner from Curaçao, having anchored off the Goajira coast, the usual method of communication with strangers was promptly resorted to by the cacique, who sent on board as hostages some of his daughters. But, instead of returning an equivalent from the vessel, the crew, with unparalleled brutality, fell upon the helpless creatures, whose cries alarmed their friends on shore, already uneasy at the detention of the canoe. A little fleet of canoes was manned with the greatest expedition, and a dead calm occurring at that moment, the schooner was quickly surrounded and boarded by the avenging aborigines, who massacred the crew and burned the vessel, but spared the lives of some children found on board.

When the facts concerning the affair were known at Curaçao, the authorities of the island, instead of viewing the fate of their countrymen as a just retribution for their misdeed, proceeded to demand instant reparation from the Venezuelian government, although it should not have been held responsible for the doings of a wild tribe of Indians. Fearing, however, to compromise the national dignity, a not unfrequent occurrence between weak republics and European nations, a force was despatched to the peninsula from Maracaibo, and without giving previous notice to the natives, as is their practice when about to commence their hostilities, attacked them and, taking prisoners several of their most prominent warriors, executed them without mercy. Among these were the parties implicated in the avenging massacre, whose conduct

on that occasion should have taught the government how to maintain the dignity of a people. The Goajiros, taken by surprise, offered but feeble resistance to an overwhelming force, and the conquerors hastened back to Maracaibo for want of water in the sandy wastes of La Goajira.

The hero of the expedition was Colonel José Escolastico Andrade, the same who a little later so ingloriously abandoned the city and all its charming women to their fate, at the approach of the Monagueros, and who, it must be confessed, on this occasion showed himself less scholastic in military tactics, than he obtained credit for in his campaign against the Indians. It is related that, while in the pursuit of this wild set, a cacique was brought hand-cuffed before Don Escolastico. At sight of the hated *orijuna*, the Indian warrior could not conceal his indignation, and addressing the commander through an interpreter, exclaimed, while he struggled to free himself: "Thou art like the cunning fox, who only attacks his prey in the darkness of night."

Quarrels among the Goajiros are settled by arbitration of the elders, providing no blood has been shed. When this occurs, the complainant expects, besides, a compensation in cattle, varying in number according to the extent of the injury inflicted. A refusal to pay is immediately followed by a challenge from the friends of the injured man, invariably resulting in the death of several on both sides. As a natural consequence, these feuds entail new reclamations and renewed hostilities, which increase the blood-tribute beyond the ability of either side to

satisfy. Thus it often happens that the strife ends only with the extermination of the contending parties. From this cause it is asserted that the population, which formerly numbered 60,000, has dwindled down to 15,000. But this is of course mere conjecture, as no one has ever ventured, beyond the frontier forts, for the purpose of taking the census.

The Goajiros devote themselves also to the cultivation of the soil, a chain of mountains running through their territory offering them excellent lands for the purpose. Don Antonio Montiel found them always ready to work for him in his extensive establishments on the Goajira coast for cutting braziletto-wood, and has even employed them very successfully in his cacao plantation at Zulia, in the southern part of the Lake of Maracaibo.

Attached to the Goajiro nation is an inferior tribe of Indians, the Cocinas, whom they have subjugated and hold as slaves, not even permitting them to dress like themselves or wear arms of any sort. The Cocinas are supposed to have originally come from the unexplored Sierra, forming the boundary between the province of Maracaibo and the northern part of New Granada.

Although considered in the light of savages, the Goajiros have given proof, on several occasions, that they are not altogether insensible to the calls of humanity and generosity. During my sojourn in Maracaibo, an English bark bound to Carthagena was wrecked on their dangerous coast during the night; the crew would have all perished amidst the foaming breakers, but for the exertions of the Indians who,

being excellent swimmers and well acquainted with the place, not only saved every soul on board, but likewise a great portion of the cargo. The same humane conduct was displayed by them toward the family of Señor Gallegos, a prominent citizen of Maracaibo; they, being also wrecked on the Goajira coast, were saved, and afterward escorted by the savages to the castle of San Carlos.

When all the avenues of communication between Maracaibo and the "outside barbarians" were cut off by the blockading forces of Monagas, the Goajiros proved invaluable couriers for the transmission of our despatches through their territory. A prince of their nation had in former years paid a visit to General Paez, then President of the republic, who received him with becoming dignity and respect; and so delighted was His Highness of the red-skin with the cordial treatment and presents which he received on this occasion from the General, that he remained ever after his warm friend and admirer. In acknowledgment of this and other civilities, the Goajiro nation now became a sort of volunteer ally and warm supporter of our cause, even to the extent of attacking the forces of Monagas, while passing through their territory to invade the province. Owing to the reprehensible negligence of our commanders who failed to guard against it, this event took place when least expected; and although our Indian allies did their utmost to check the advance of the enemy, the reverse was the dastardly conduct of those intrusted with the custody of the public safety. Instead of sending our fleet to capture or destroy the few vessels

sent by Monagas to the coast of Coro for the transportation of his troops, they held it back in readiness to decamp, which they did the moment it became known that a landing on the Goajira coast had been effected, while the enemy were still many miles from Maracaibo. The indignation of the people was so great, that some of the leaders would have undoubtedly fallen a sacrifice to public vengeance, but for the presence of the fleet and a squadron of cavalry, composed mainly of Llaneros. Even so they had great difficulty in accomplishing the embarcation of the troops, only one half of which ever reached their destination, the castle of San Carlos.

In the mean time, the invading forces were every day being terribly decimated by the poisoned arrows and conical balls of the Indian warriors who, in addition, poisoned the few wells along the route, which they paved with concealed arrow-heads, set upright beneath the sand; as none of the soldiers in our armies wear shoes, those who escaped the unerring aim of the arrows, fell afterward victims to the virus of the hidden ones. Many also perished amidst these burning sands for want of water, and were afterward almost disheartened by an excess of it, as the ragged vagabonds found the river Socuy swollen to overflow.

All the canoes had been removed by order of Serrano, the Governor of Maracaibo; but this did not deter Castelli, the commander of the invading forces, from crossing on rafts, finding no foe there to dispute his passage. A few companies of fusiliers would have been sufficient to hold them in check, while the Indians were constantly hovering on their rear; and although

some troops and armed piraguas had been detailed with that object, the cowardly commanders abandoned the river at sight of the enemy and returned to Maracaibo, only to increase the alarm of the no less pusillanimous leaders there.

Many days after the latter had retired to the castle, the enemy, in bands of one or two hundred, with all their powder wet, and ready to throw themselves upon the mercy of their antagonists, appeared before the city, which they occupied without the least opposition. Even then it would have been an easy task to make them all prisoners, as it was known that the fever, contracted in their passage through the marshy borders of the Socuy, had broken out among them, while all communication with their base of operations was effectually cut off by our fleet. Still the poltroons who held the fate, not only of their own province but also of the whole country in their hands, with an enthusiastic population to back them and abundant resources at command, hesitated for a long time to invest the city with the forces under them, contenting themselves with a little skirmishing and a useless waste of ammunition at long range. Tired at length of this amusement, and having more vessels than they required, they conceived the grand idea of detailing a portion of the fleet to frighten Monagas in his capital, by sending a few random shots along the coast of La Guaira and Puerto Cabello. As I was also growing weary of my confinement in the narrow island of San Carlos, I gladly joined the expedition, although I entertained but little hope of its ultimate success.

CHAPTER XXX.

A CRUISE IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA.

On the 15th of July, 1848, the vessels, ten in number, intended for the expedition, were assembled at Bajo-Seco, a sandy islet near the bar, forming a small bay opposite the castle of San Carlos. The Honorable J. H. Garcia, one of the five members of Congress, whose heads were so highly prized by Monagas, harangued the troops, two hundred strong, intended for this formidable expedition, after which they were distributed on board the different transports. These consisted of the bark Maracaibo, mounting seven guns; schooners Constitucion, six; Paez and Diez de Junio, three; and the others a pivot-gun each.

We were obliged to wait several hours at Bajo-Seco until the high-tide should permit the bark, which drew a little over eleven feet, to pass over the bar. Toward evening we were fairly out to sea, and from that moment commenced our troubles and sufferings, the whole night being employed in making short tacks, to avoid the dangerous breakers at the mouth

of the lake, with a heavy sea washing constantly overhead.

When morning dawned we found ourselves nearer the point of our departure than from the reckoning of the tacks we had supposed, the current having driven us during the night in the direction of the bar; so that, after fifteen hours' sailing, we were still in sight of the castle.

The following night was even worse than the preceding, the wind increasing in violence as the sun went down. The sea rose so high that more than once it was feared our bark would be thrown on her beam ends. From one of the schooners a soldier fell overboard; and although the night was intensely dark, and in spite of the heavy sea, the gallant mate Pocaterra immediately went into a boat to search for him, declaring that unless the man was devoured by sharks, he was certain to maintain himself afloat until assistance could reach him. After a search of two hours, the soldier was picked up by the boat, having escaped both the fury of the waves and the voracity of the sharks. My admiration was equally divided between the great powers of endurance displayed by the preserved, and the hardihood of his preserver.

Six or seven days were spent in vain endeavors to reach the island of Oruba, a distance which, had the wind and current been in our favor, we could have accomplished in as many hours. As the provisions were already nearly exhausted, it was decided to tack for the bay of Los Taques, not an inappropriate name, on the coast of Coro, where some fishermen supplied us with salt *jurel*, a fish very abundant at that place.

Our next effort to reach Oruba resulted in a worse failure, as we were carried along by the tide for a considerable distance. I proposed to our commander that he would depress the muzzle of the pivot-gun and permit me to apply a match to the touch-hole, the result of which operation would certainly have been to impel us most rapidly *down* the gulf; the captain then informed me that, not long before, the commander of a Danish man-of-war had been detained for over thirty days on this very spot, and despairing of ever ascending the channel between Oruba and the coast of Paraguaná, he carried into execution the plan, which I flattered myself had originated in my own brain, and which I proposed as an effectual termination to our successive disappointments.

It was indeed most discouraging to be constantly in sight of the land, where we expected to obtain fresh provisions and a pilot, but which we of the bark seemed destined never to reach. The schooners, from the nature of their rigging, could sail more easily along the channel against a head wind; two of them were therefore despatched to Curaçao for the purpose of apprising our friends of our serious *contretemps*, and to obtain there the much needed provisions.

A slight change of weather at length allowed the rest of the fleet to reach the western end of Oruba, and with the assistance of a pilot from that island, we were enabled to proceed on our voyage of adventure as far as Curaçao. There we were joined by the other vessels, and refreshed with sundry baskets of most

the nerves, which increased gradually to violent jerks of the whole frame, until death relieved the agonized sufferer.

There is no known antidote to this poison, except that of immediate cauterization, where the wound is not too deep. Aware of this, the vengeful Indian makes his arrow's tip of the bone of the sting-ray, notching it deeply in several places, so that it is sure to break off in the flesh, while the serrated edges prevent its extraction.

Señor Montiel, who for many years had traded with this savage tribe of Indians, and was well acquainted with their history and habits, gave me very interesting details concerning them and the concocting of this direful poison. The contents of the witches' caldron in "Macbeth" was a harmless drug in comparison with it. A number of dead reptiles, snakes, toads and lizards, with a sprinkling of centipedes, scorpions and tarantulas, are placed in a gourd and allowed to rot until they all, "like a hell broth, boil and bubble" into a yellowish liquid, which collects at the bottom of the gourd: in this, the points of the arrows are steeped, and then laid aside to dry.

The Goajiros are equally expert in the use of firearms, and being in addition most accomplished riders, they oppose a formidable barrier against the permanent occupation of their territory. They were perhaps the first inventors of conical balls, which they have been in the habit of manufacturing for themselves since they have become masters of the gun; and so expeditious are they in their management of it, that they can load and fire in less time than any

occurrence of this event, on returning to Caracas from exile, I was surprised to hear there one morning that the General had coughed up a musket-ball during the night. The affair naturally excited a good deal of talk throughout the city; but on examination by competent persons, it was discovered that the missile, doubtless the identical one fired at him by the guerillas, proceeded from his nose, having worked itself a passage through the roof of his mouth into his throat. It is not to be wondered at that the General's personal appearance had undergone so remarkable a change, having an ounce of lead lodged in the bridge of his nose. Had the bullet penetrated a line deeper, he would have been spared the annoyance resulting from repeated doses of mercurial compounds, sarsaparilla, and other medicaments administered by his physician, under the supposition that the hardening and swelling of his nose arose from a different cause.

We continued sailing along the coast, with occasional stoppages at the plantations, intending to procure there fresh provisions or capture some stray *falucho*, loaded with cacao, for which the wealthy *oligarcas* were afterward made to pay handsomely. As we approached the eastern sea, fish were so abundant, that our gallant commanders gave up their wild-goose chase for the more entertaining sport afforded by the hook and line. Each time the bait was cast overboard, we had the satisfaction of hauling in a *carite*, or its larger congener the *sierra*, two species of mackerel, occasionally taken on the coast of the United States under the name of Spanish mackerel, but extremely common in the Caribbean Sea. They

the nerves, which increased gradually to violent jerks of the whole frame, until death relieved the agonized sufferer.

There is no known antidote to this poison, except that of immediate cauterization, where the wound is not too deep. Aware of this, the vengeful Indian makes his arrow's tip of the bone of the sting-ray, notching it deeply in several places, so that it is sure to break off in the flesh, while the serrated edges prevent its extraction.

Señor Montiel, who for many years had traded with this savage tribe of Indians, and was well acquainted with their history and habits, gave me very interesting details concerning them and the concocting of this direful poison. The contents of the witches' caldron in "Macbeth" was a harmless drug in comparison with it. A number of dead reptiles, snakes, toads and lizards, with a sprinkling of centipedes, scorpions and tarantulas, are placed in a gourd and allowed to rot until they all, "like a hell broth, boil and bubble" into a yellowish liquid, which collects at the bottom of the gourd: in this, the points of the arrows are steeped, and then laid aside to dry.

The Goajiros are equally expert in the use of firearms, and being in addition most accomplished riders, they oppose a formidable barrier against the permanent occupation of their territory. They were perhaps the first inventors of conical balls, which they have been in the habit of manufacturing for themselves since they have become masters of the gun; and so expeditious are they in their management of it, that they can load and fire in less time than any

while at full speed; otherwise they "won't take" the hook.

Among others, caught from our schooner, was a large sword-fish measuring ten feet in length, and weighing seventy-five pounds. It gave us considerable trouble to pull him on deck, requiring the efforts of two men, and he was not secured until he had struck the vessel several blows with his powerful bayonet-shaped rostrum, a portion of which was left embedded in the copper sheathing of the schooner. Some attain still larger dimensions, measuring from fifteen to twenty feet, and weighing as much again, in proportion to the size of the one caught on that occasion.

Next to the shark, the sword-fish is perhaps the most dangerous inhabitant of those seas, attacking indiscriminately whatever comes in his way. The bulky sperm-whale, or *chacalote*, especially offers him a convenient mark on which to exercise his belligerent propensities, his peculiar shape enabling the sword-fish to penetrate deeply into the body of his antagonist, from which he seldom comes out again. Not even sailing vessels are exempt from his attacks, although usually at the expense of his formidable weapon, which is almost invariably left broken off in the timbers.

The conformation of this fish is admirably adapted

the nerves, which increased gradually to violent jerks of the whole frame, until death relieved the agonized sufferer.

There is no known antidote to this poison, except that of immediate cauterization, where the wound is not too deep. Aware of this, the vengeful Indian makes his arrow's tip of the bone of the sting-ray, notching it deeply in several places, so that it is sure to break off in the flesh, while the serrated edges prevent its extraction.

Señor Montiel, who for many years had traded with this savage tribe of Indians, and was well acquainted with their history and habits, gave me very interesting details concerning them and the concocting of this direful poison. The contents of the witches' caldron in "Macbeth" was a harmless drug in comparison with it. A number of dead reptiles, snakes, toads and lizards, with a sprinkling of centipedes, scorpions and tarantulas, are placed in a gourd and allowed to rot until they all, "like a hell broth, boil and bubble" into a yellowish liquid, which collects at the bottom of the gourd: in this, the points of the arrows are steeped, and then laid aside to dry.

The Goajiros are equally expert in the use of firearms, and being in addition most accomplished riders, they oppose a formidable barrier against the permanent occupation of their territory. They were perhaps the first inventors of conical balls, which they have been in the habit of manufacturing for themselves since they have become masters of the gun; and so expeditious are they in their management of it, that they can load and fire in less time than any

SWORD-FISH.—XIPHIAS-GLADIUS.

sooner think of wading through the Stygian Lake, than of plunging beneath deep water on that day.

The excellence and abundance of the fish, and the excitement of catching them, contributed greatly to vary the monotony of our tedious voyage. With the exception of the bark, all the other vessels were so small that we were compelled to remain on deck both day and night. Happily, not a single case of sickness occurred during the trip, although all were constantly exposed to the equinoctial sun and showers. The sea air of Venezuela is remarkably healthful at all seasons; owing to local causes, fevers are incidental to but few places along the coast. The trade-wind is also singularly uniform, the fearful hurricanes so prevalent in the West Indies being unknown there.

We hailed at length the high mountains of Colombia's brightest jewel, Margarita—the pearl—so named by Columbus from the abundance and splendor of those gems obtained by him from the aborigines on his third voyage of discovery to America. The island has subsequently become more celebrated by the heroic resistance of the inhabitants against the combined forces of Spain by land and water, winning for her the glorious appellation of New Sparta.

While steering for that brave little island in hopes of finding there at least space sufficient in which to stretch our weary limbs cramped by long confinement to the small vessels, our gallant fleet had a splendid chase after the Yankee steamer that carried there the reënforcements sent by Monagas. Doubtless, mistaking our vessels for the squadron of the latter, momentarily expected in those waters, the steamer was ap-

proaching us under a full head of steam, when a schooner in advance of the others very foolishly fired a shot at her, which by the way did her no harm as she was three miles off, thus apprising her of the real character of our fleet. Of course, all efforts after this to overtake her were futile, and we proceeded on our forlorn voyage, having wasted several rounds of ammunition.

We coasted for a day or two along the arid shores on the south side of the island; but finding there neither friend nor foe from whom to gain information respecting the state of affairs in the interior, we finally dropped anchor near the little island of Coche, a dependency of the former, where we had the mortification of learning that all its important forts had been strongly garrisoned by the enemy; but not having a sufficient number of troops on board to effect a landing on that coast, it was unanimously decided by our commanders that there were no laurels growing there for them, only very prickly cactuses.

The province of Cumanà, on the mainland, was known to be most friendly to our cause; preparations were therefore made to land on that coast, and endeavor to effect a communication with some guerillas in the interior. With this object we secured at Coche a number of *flecheras*—long boats used in Margarita for spreading the nets—and a sufficient number of Guaiquerí Indians to man them. These boats are fifty feet long, very sharp and low, to admit of their being propelled by paddles dexterously handled by the Indian rowers, who, keeping perfect time in the strokes, give, in consequence, greater impetus to

the *flecheras;* hence their name, from *flecha*, an arrow. When manned by fifteen or twenty rowers on a side, the usual allowance for each boat, they look like huge centipedes skimming swiftly over the water.

The Guaiqueries are besides very expert divers, on which account they were advantageously employed in the pearl-fisheries of Margarita before the oyster beds producing the pearls were destroyed by greedy speculators. In former times, Margarita was the centre of a brisk trade with people of all nations, who flocked there to procure those beautiful gems "of purest ray serene." The inhabitants, however, carry on at present a more permanent business in the produce of their seines. At Coche, where the most considerable fisheries are located, I had an opportunity of witnessing the exploits of the Indian divers, when they were overhauling the contents of the enormous seines employed there. So great was the draught of fish in one of them, that four hundred men could not land it; therefore, some of the captives were allowed to escape, which was done by the divers unfastening under water the cords uniting the two compartments dividing these seines—a feat accomplished by the Guaiqueries in an incredibly short time, regardless of the numerous sharks among the other fish. The seine being thus partially relieved of its contents, was speedily dragged on shore, when men, women, and children busied themselves in cleaning, salting, and spreading the fish to dry upon the sand. The care of removing the remains and smaller fry accumulated upon the beach, was left to the dogs and pigs from the village, who feasted during a whole

afternoon upon, among other things, the finest sardines I ever saw. The fishermen call these Spanish sardines, probably from their beautiful appearance, it being still the habit of the people in South America to honor with that adjective any thing particularly fine.

Our short stay at Coche, although not quite so satisfactory in a political point of view, was productive of great relief to us after our wearisome voyage up the coast. When ready to depart for the mainland, most of the male inhabitants of the island volunteered their services and their flecheras; nor did they omit to bring along a seine, which proved of great advantage in providing fish for all when no other provisions could be obtained. Each of the larger vessels took a flechera in tow, and thus equipped we set sail for Carupano, a port of some importance to the south-east of Margarita. We passed an American schooner at anchor near the spot where, years ago, the Spanish line-of-battle-ship San Pedro Alcantara was burned to the water's edge and sunk during the terrible siege of the island by the royalists. A large amount of money, said to be not less than two millions of dollars, was lost along with her, and the crew of the Yankee vessel, well provided with the necessary appliances, were now engaged in diving for the almighty dollar. They had succeeded in blasting the old hulk to pieces with the assistance of a galvanic battery and diving-bell; but whether they dug up sufficient "tin" to pay expenses and leave a handsome surplus, no one knew. All that was known was, that after each explosion enough of dead fish

was picked from the surface of the water to load the schooner. Perhaps the fear of rousing the cupidity of their less industrious neighbors occasioned this extreme reserve.

Two days' sailing in the placid waters of the eastern sea, brought us before the ramparts of Carupano, which town unfortunately we found also already occupied by troops sent from the city of Cumanâ and other places less devoted to our cause. We attempted, nevertheless, to effect a landing under cover of night, but were deterred from doing so by the timely warning of some citizens, who swam over to our vessels and informed us that the enemy were strongly barricaded at all points. By the advice of those friends we then directed our course toward the bay of Puerto Santo, east of Carupano, where they assured us the people would flock by hundreds to join us. Our informants then wished us God speed and left us, returning on shore to prepare the people for our projected move.

We were not deceived in this as we had been by other similar promises, for before morning we were joined by about three hundred mountaineers, all good marksmen, and eager to have a brush with the Monagueros in the city. Without waiting for further reënforcements, our commander, Colonel Codazzi, immediately ordered the advance upon Carupano over the hardest road conceivable, and so full of enormous centipedes, most of them twelve inches long, that it required the utmost care on our part to avoid stepping upon them. Their bite, although not fatal, is

exceedingly painful at the moment, followed by a high degree of local inflammation.

In contrast with these poisonous insects, the beautiful, I might call it wonderful, butterfly-flower (Oncidium papilio) also abounds there. It belongs to the natural order Orchidaceæ, better known under the popular name of air-plants or parasites, those lovely daughters of Flora and Favonius, so rich in perfume as well as color, but whose principal charm consists in their caricaturing every object in nature, from the "human form divine" to the humble bee, often deceived by a perfect representation of his species, (Ophrys apifera.) Thus we count among our floral treasures, "angels," "swans," "doves," "eagles," "pelicans," "spiders," "bumble-bees," and even a perfect infant in the cradle was found by Linden in the mountains of Merida. The celebrated *Flor del Espiritu Santo* (Peristeria elata) is another of this class.

Many are the beautiful allegories with which the fanciful imagination of the children of the tropics has clothed these marvellous productions of their luxuriant zone. "Not an infant is baptized, not a marriage is celebrated, not a funeral obsequy is performed, at which the aid of these flowers is not called in by the sentimental natives, to assist the expression of their feelings; they are offered by the devotee at the shrine of his favorite saint, by the lover at the feet of his mistress, and by the sorrowing survivor at the grave of his friend; whether, in short, on fast days or feast days, on occasion of rejoicing or in moments of distress, these flowers are sought for with an avidity which would seem to say that there was 'no sympathy like theirs;' thus, 'Flor de los Santos,' 'Flor de Corpus,' 'Flor de los Muertos,' 'Flor de Mayo,' 'No me olvides,' (or 'Forget-me-not,') are but a few names out of the many that might be cited to prove the high consideration in which our favorites are held in the New World. Nor are these the only honors that are paid to them; for Hernandez assures us that in Mexico the Indian chiefs set the very highest value on their blossoms, for the sake of their great beauty, strange figure and delightful perfume; while in the East Indies, if Rumphius is to be credited, the flowers themselves positively refuse to be worn, except by princes or ladies of high degree."*

Pardon, gracious reader, if, fearing the hundred-footed monsters upon the road, I have taken so lofty a flight among the "angels" and "spread-eagles"

* Bateman, Orchidea.

overhead; air-plants, my special delight, never escape a passing compliment from me.

Descending to the beautiful valley of Maracapana after our fatiguing march over the mountains, we were again warned not to attack the city, as our force was insufficient to dislodge the enemy from their intrenchments. Without stopping to count them at all events, we retraced our steps and fell suddenly upon Rio-Caribe, another port further east, which we captured after a feeble resistance from the garrison. I had the honor of being the only one hit, though slightly, on this occasion.

The fleet had now no difficulty in getting safely into a snug harbor, which it did on the same day, anchoring in front of our barracks near the mouth of the little river from which the port takes its name. A large quantity of cacao, captured during our cruise, being stored in them, the Honorable H. Garcia, who acted in the double capacity of Quartermaster-general and Commander-in-chief for the time being, proceeded to discharge, weigh, and re-ship to St. Thomas our ill-gotten booty, to be disposed of for provisions and other necessaries.

Rio-Caribe has the disadvantage of being rather sultry and unhealthy, on which account we did not enjoy our conquest longer than was necessary to muster some additional reënforcements of volunteers. Attracted by the refreshing shade along the woody banks of the river, several of our men were in the habit of spending there in idleness a great portion of the day; but even this small comfort was of short duration, it being observed after a while that many

of those who frequented the spot, became benumbed and swollen in the most unaccountable manner. On investigating the cause of this singular disorder, it proved to arise from the baneful exhalations of an euphorbiaceous tree, the Hippomane mancinella or *manzanillo*, whose dense foliage of a brilliant green particularly invites the weary and indolent to repose under its shade. It bears a fruit not unlike a small apple in shape, color, and perfume, hence its name; unfortunately, like the apple of Eden, it is forbidden fruit among the paradisiacal groves of the New World. Yet, the fertile imagination of the author of Monte Cristo, parodying the luminous science of the South-American Orfila, would not fail to find *in* it a splendid subject for another dissertation on the transfusion of poisons.

The *manzanillo* is a lover of the sea-shore, especially rocky places washed by the dashing waves, and the fruit, dropping in the water, is eagerly swallowed by fish which, although not affected by the poison, readily transmit it to those who partake of their flesh. Muleteers, unacquainted with the poisonous properties of this plant, often ruin their animals by driving them with rods obtained from the branches of the tree.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HO! FOR MARACAIBO.

"He who fights and runs away,
Lives to fight another day."

The scarcity of provisions at Rio-Caribe, which only offered a daily fare of fish, but more especially the fact that the enemy were marching in strong force upon us, determined our leader to return forthwith to Maracaibo. Fearing, however, to lose the further coöperation of our eastern allies, who would undoubtedly refuse to follow, and unwilling to leave them behind, our commanders resorted to the stratagem of feigning a landing on the coast of Margarita, the friendly disposition of the inhabitants affording them a plausible pretext. Accordingly, all the troops were transferred on board the transports, with instructions to rendezvous at the port of Juan Griego, on the north of the island, and a fine evening breeze blowing at the time, we soon lost sight of the straggling town of Rio-Caribe and its poisonous orchards.

The next morning all the vessels were quietly riding at anchor in the above-mentioned harbor, but no

prospect of landing. The enemy, doubtless astonished at our apparent audacity, remained watching our ships from the ramparts of the forts on shore, which did not open upon us until the Constitucion sent a random shot to draw their fire. We had been told that these forts were dismantled, and had only a couple of guns left to fire salutes, which, having for balls only a few rusty shells, were, it was said, as useless as the broken carriages upon which they were mounted; yet the first shot struck off the head of the man stationed at the top of the flag-vessel, while others, following in quick succession, were aimed with so much accuracy, that it was found expedient to haul off to a safe distance. Toward evening the top-sail-man cried out "A sail to leeward!" and immediately after another and another hove in sight, until eleven vessels were signalled. No doubts could be now entertained that the enemy's fleet were approaching; but, instead of proceeding to attack it while we had the advantage of the windward, ours improved it to decamp; and such was their haste that I, in company with another young officer, having been sent out to reconnoitre along the coast, had scarce time to scramble on board the rear vessel, the one we belonged to being already far away.

The enemy's fleet, observing our movements, gave chase; but, night approaching, we lost sight of each other until morning, when, to my sorrow, I perceived the transport containing the Llaneros attacked by one of the enemy's vessels, a large brig, while ours were—nowhere. The Llaneros had no defence on board except their lances; these would have been

sufficient on land, but on shipboard served only to clog the movements of men unaccustomed to the heavings of the sea. Perceiving that the commander of the Paez—which vessel had received me on board —did not go to the rescue of the transport, although the rest of the fleet were far away to leeward, I ventured to suggest to the commander the humanity of such a step, but had scarcely spoken when, seizing me roughly by the arm, he threatened to put me in irons if I uttered another word upon that subject.

After this violent demonstration, my sympathy for the Llaneros was of necessity smothered; but my resolve, though a silent one, was full of hope that I should at some future day proclaim to the world the poltroonery of these commanders. To their shame, and that of our colonel, also on board, a little schooner, commanded by a foreigner, an Italian whose name I do not now recollect, mounting only one twelve-pounder pivot-gun, hove in sight at that moment, and, perceiving the dangerous situation of the transport, immediately went to her assistance, and took her in tow, after partially disabling the brig.

Toward noon we succeeded in coming up with our fleet squadron, which, finding itself still pursued by the enemy's vessels, and doubtless ashamed of its hasty retreat, now faced about with a determination which, if at first exhibited, would have been highly creditable. Now it was the enemy's turn to 'vamose,' for scarcely had we formed our line of battle and prepared for the attack, than their vessels turned about and made off, never stopping until they reached Juan Griego. Our commanders at once improved the

opportunity to get themselves out of the scrape as quickly as possible, making their way back to Maracaibo in as many days as it had previously taken weeks to accomplish the same distance.

When I found myself again within the crumbling walls of the fort of San Carlos, with nothing but parched corn and occasional strips of lean beef for food, while the borders of the lake were abounding in fine cattle and luscious plantains, I, rather than thus starve in the midst of plenty, almost wished myself a prisoner in the filthy dungeons of the enemy; not from despair of the good cause I, as well as the rest of my family, had embraced, but the culpable remissness of the leaders in the province was such that, although they could with ease have provided against this wretchedness, having a numerous fleet of piraguas at their disposal, they kept the troops stationed at the castle in almost a famishing condition. Many of the poor fellows kidnapped from the healthy mountains of Carupano, died of dysentery, induced by the miserable fare and brackish water of San Carlos.

Necessity finally compelled the sluggish Andrade to make a move toward the city, where the enemy were quietly refreshing themselves upon the fat of the land after their hard march through La Goagira. A simple message sent by the Governor Serrano to the owners of piraguas soon brought together around the island every craft available for the embarkation of troops and their material. These were easily landed at Los Haticos under the guns of the fleet, but Castelli, who was not so dilatory as our commander, came out to the encounter as he was on his way to invest the

city. A fierce engagement with our advance, commanded by two brave Englishmen, Colonels Weir and Minchin, immediately took place; and although the enemy fought with desperation, they were finally compelled to retreat in disorder toward the city, which could have been captured the same day but for the stupidity of Andrade, who ordered Minchin back to Los Haticos. Here the former afterward amused himself in cutting down the beautiful cocoanut palms shading the place, to form with them barricades around the houses of that rural retreat, fearing another sortie of the enemy.

These, although terribly cut up in the first engagement, and despite the barricades and heavy artillery, were not deterred from again attacking us—this time, however, with even more disastrous results to themselves than in the previous fight. Nearly one-half their numbers were left dead upon the field, and the survivors hastened back to the city to make preparations for a speedy surrender. Still Andrade, whose force had greatly increased by voluntary enlistments of the people, hesitated to advance beyond his intrenchments, not even permitting the brave Belisario to pursue the flying enemy with his Llanero cavalry.

At length a brilliant plan for distinguishing himself flashed upon Andrade, on hearing that reënforcements for Castelli were being assembled at Quisiro on the other side of the lake; these he proposed to annihilate before they could be smuggled into Maracaibo, embarking with this object seven hundred of the best troops at his command, beside a battery of light artillery. A landing was soon effected on the ene-

my's territory, his pickets driven in, and the straggling village of Quisiro invested in due form. Although its entire force did not amount to more than two hundred men under Zamora and Baca, they repelled all our attacks from behind the fences of the houses; whereupon Andrade, instead of bringing his artillery to bear on those frail barricades, ordered a charge with the bayonet, which, of course, resulted in a repulse and great slaughter on our side. Then—as if fearful that the broad expanse of water between the enemy and his camp at Los Haticos would be insufficient to guard against pursuit—he ordered a retreat toward San Carlos.

We lost several valuable officers and a great number of men by that foolish adventure; yet the spirit of the troops, far from being daunted, seemed to gain fresh vigor after this reverse. Those who escaped being killed or wounded clamored to be carried back to Los Haticos, hoping that some more decided measures would be taken for the reduction of the city.

The enemy, emboldened by our discomfiture at Quisiro, made another *sortie*, with the object of procuring cattle for their famished regiments. They found no difficulty in collecting a large flock of goats and other animals, which they were driving over a hilly country toward the city, when, informed of their return by our videttes, Andrade ordered Commandant Belisario to intercept them with his cavalry, instead of detailing a body of infantry for that service. Never shall I forget the look of smiling resignation with which the noble-minded fellow rode past me at the head of his troop; nor, to my inquiry of "Where bound,

compañero?" his ominous reply, "*A morir!*" for he well knew the hazard of the undertaking; yet uncomplainingly did this brave heart pass from our sight to fulfil the fatal order of his superior. A few moments after, we heard a volley of musketry, followed by some random shots, which told us plainly that the fearless Llaneros had broken and dispersed the hosts opposed to them; but, alas! at the cost of their gallant commander, who with his charger fell, pierced with bullets, amid the bristling bayonets of the enemy. His comrades succeeded, nevertheless,

LIEUT.-COLONEL ANTONIO BELISARIO.

in carrying away his remains, after dispersing the marauders, whom they pursued to the environs of the beleaguered city.

When the lifeless body of Belisario was brought into the encampment at Los Haticos, it was received by his companions in arms with such demonstrations of loving reverence as virtues like his should ever command. The patriotic *Maracaiberas* were among the first to show their appreciation of the fallen hero by their graceful and fragrant adornings of his funeral bier, while all wept for this departed brave, as though with him had passed away the last hope for the good cause.

It was, indeed, a sad spectacle to behold those cold remains, only a few hours before instinct with life and energy, breathing but in noble aspirations, and filled with every grace and virtue that endears man to man, now laid in mournful state. Even the stern Englishmen, usually so undemonstrative, could not repress their tears when the first notes of the funeral march wailed forth as we bore him with solemn step to his grave. Thus departed one who, had he lived, would have been an honor to his country, as he was already among the bravest and best.

Another of the most daring in our little army was an American officer whose name, Barclay Clements, will long be admiringly remembered by his comrades in Venezuela. Being unfamiliar with the Spanish language, he had no special duty assigned him, yet he was a host in himself with that terrible weapon of his nation, the rifle. Woe to the incautious "monagoso" who, confiding in his stout intrenchments, should show his head above the parapet. A sudden disappearance of the red cap, following the crack of the Kentucky rifle, sufficiently indicated the probable

fate of its wearer. So formidable was the execution done by the sharpshooter—who made more havoc among Castelli's ranks than all the cannon brought by Andrade from the castle of San Carlos—that the former was induced to set a prize upon the head of him whom he distinguished as the "accursed Yankee."

Ammunition being rather a scarce commodity in the enemy's camp, a few rounds from our artillery, in lieu of being dreaded, were considered quite a God-send by the besieged, who never failed to return us our own missiles with good effect from a couple of rusty carronades formerly used as moorings for vessels in the harbor, but which the ingenious Castelli had now mounted upon heavy logs of mahogany. A most melancholy catastrophe was once caused by one of these guns among the market-women of Los Haticos, four of them, and two men, being killed by a single ball in its rebound from a palm tree.

During several months no material advantage was gained on either side; so time and ammunition were frittered away in fruitless skirmishes. At length the enemy's fleet, recovering from its fright in the eastern sea, made its appearance at the bar of Maracaibo, which it, nevertheless, did not venture to cross, owing to the presence of some of our vessels; yet, they maintained a strict blockade at the mouth of the lake, permitting neither ingress nor egress. About this time a fine iron steamer, obtained by General Paez from the United States, arrived at the island of Oruba short of coal and without armament to successfully run the blockade. Unfortunately, she fell into the hands of the enthusiastic Garcia, who, although very

able in making speeches, knew nothing of naval affairs. By his advice and urgent solicitations she was hurried to San Carlos with as many bundles of brushwood as the barren soil of Oruba could afford. By the time she reached the bar the steamer had consumed the last chip, consequently she fell an easy prey to the enemy's fleet, and was forthwith taken to Puerto Cabello.

The roughness of the sea outside the bar, especially in the month of November, when the "Northerns" render the anchorage there very unsafe, compelled the blockading squadron to beat about to windward for a while, thus affording another steamer, purchased by General Paez the opportunity to run in, which she did amid the liveliest rejoicings of the army and navy. The enemy's absence was of but short duration. Strengthened by some additional vessels, while we could only oppose to them six or seven schooners at the time, they improved the high tides then prevailing to force the bar when least expected, driving our little squadron like chaff before the wind. The artillery of the castle, however, speedily arrested the progress of both conquerors and conquered, the latter not even stopping to fire a shot at their pursuers. What made the flight still more humiliating, was the presence of an English frigate, whose gallant crew witnessed the whole transaction from her anchorage outside the bar. I was standing on the parapet of the castle, amazed at the strange manœuvrings of our schooners when, roused to consciousness of the cause by the first flash from the enemy's cannon, I perceived that it was fired precisely in my direction;

I involuntarily moved a little to one side, and immediately after saw a ball strike the spot upon which I had been standing. Whether it was aimed at me or not, was matter of but little consideration; yet I could not fail to congratulate myself that the enemy had lost such food for rejoicing as would have been the death of General Paez's son.

Thus far victorious, the enemy might then have pushed on to Maracaibo and bombarded the camp at Los Haticos before Andrade was even aware of his danger. But they lacked the pluck of Padilla, who, in 1824, performed a similar feat before a vastly superior force. Regardless of the thunders of San Carlos—then in the hands of the Spaniards—and a powerful fleet beside, the patriot General compelled the latter to retreat beyond the shoals of El Tablazo, and afterward boarded and captured the whole fleet.

Awed by the fires from the castle, the enemy quickly withdrew to Bajo Seco, where they could have been speedily destroyed if our commanders had had the precaution to establish a battery on that sandy islet while they held possession of it. This the enemy effected without loss of time, to the subsequent ruin of our fleet and prospects.

A council of war was convened on the next day to meet at San Carlos, and a plan adopted for the immediate attack of the enemy's fleet; but, desirous of avoiding, as much as possible, the shedding of blood, it was decided to send a despatch to the commander, General Briceño, requesting him to withdraw from those waters before he should be compelled thereto *vi et armis*. I was commissioned to carry this humane

warning, and although I expected nothing short of violent imprisonment, I was received with courtesy and even kindness by the officers, who only detained me long enough to treat me to a good breakfast.

General Briceño having declined our terms, orders were issued to the commanders of all our vessels to assemble at San Carlos, and hold themselves in readiness for the forthcoming battle. Before morning dawned on the following day, the fleet were under way and attacked the enemy in their safe anchorage; but, instead of prosecuting the plan first laid out, viz., that of boarding each of the enemy's vessels, as was practised by Padilla, they opened their fires upon them under full canvas, and with a rapidly ebbing tide. The consequence was a nearly total destruction of the whole fleet by a raking storm of cannon and musketry, the narrowness of the channel not permitting them to sail round the foe, as had been their intention. The vessels that were not driven ashore had the rigging so badly cut that they could scarcely regain their anchorage, while the enemy sustained little or no injury. Great was also our loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners, which so disheartened the leaders that, without waiting an attack from the blockading forces—still in their former positions—they resolved to evacuate the province altogether, preferring an inglorious retreat to the honorable capitulation offered by General Briceño through me.

Andrade, however, managed the evacuation of the castle and his camp before Maracaibo with greater skill than he had displayed in conducting the siege; for it was not until the chief part of the distance to

Congo Bay had been accomplished, that the enemy discovered the retreat. Thither Briceño followed us in a steamer and a few other vessels, judging from the hasty manner of our departure that our forces must be in a state of complete demoralization, as was indeed the case, some of the commanders of the fleet actually refusing to obey orders, and directing their course toward the Catatumbo, in search of an outlet to New Granada, preferring this rather than to rendezvous at the mouth of the Escalante, as commanded. For my part, I did not see the wisdom of trying to escape by either route, as the one would lead us through a thick forest and quagmires into the province of Merida, in possession of the enemy; while the other was no less fraught with difficulty and hardships, not to mention the tormenting insects to be encountered on the river.

Those of our companions in arms who had never before visited the interior of the lake, and who had only some faint idea of the famous *nubes de mosquitos* —clouds of mosquitoes—often wafted by the breeze across the water, were now alarmed by the appearance in the air of long, dark streaks, resembling the smoke from the chimney of a steamer. There being no other vessels of this sort upon the lake but the one we were in and the enemy's, they naturally supposed that the latter was close upon us. These fears were not dispelled until somewhat later in the day, when a shower of mosquitos fell upon the deck like a bursting water-spout. They were, however, of a different species from those with which I was already acquainted, differing from them in the absence of the proboscis; consequently they do not sting, and are

therefore called *mosquitos bobos*—foolish mosquitos.

No less *bobos* proved to be our pilots in seeking for the mouth of the Escalante, mistaking one of its numerous creeks for the main channel of the river. After considerable effort we succeeded in getting the steamer through the narrow creek, having grounded several times in the attempt, and lost much valuable time. Great numbers of piraguas, laden with troops, had preceded us, and were now endeavoring to reach the town of Zulia—our destination—by the slow method of dragging with hooked poles, as described in a former chapter. The other vessels of the fleet were all abandoned at the mouth of the river, with the exception of two that were blown up by their commanders. A little more reflection would have shown the expediency of sinking them instead, thus blocking the channel and preventing the enemy's steamers from ascending the Escalante after our disorganized forces. Not even a guard was stationed below the town to apprise us in case of pursuit, Andrade not intending to abide longer at Zulia than was necessary to dispose his march through the tangled forest and almost impassable morasses of that unhealthy region.

On arriving at the place, our forces scarcely amounted to four hundred men all told, the rest having deserted in various ways. The town offering but few accommodations for even so small a body of troops, most of these were immediately transferred to the other side of the river. Only a squad of infantry and what remained of the faithful Llaneros, were left to look after the sick and wounded. Having at the

time no special duty to perform, excepting that of interpreter on board the steamer, I remained at my post until nightfall; but the mosquitos proving rather importunate, I proposed to the officers that we should seek accommodations on shore, not in the least anticipating an attack, for that night at all events.

When about retiring to our beds we were startled by the sound of two or three shots in the direction of the plaza. One of us, my brother Sabas, went out to reconnoitre, but before his return we heard a tremendous volley of musketry, and yells of *Viva Monagas.* I did not know what became of my companions, but they all disappeared in an instant; nor did they even report themselves on board the steamer, which I reached by swimming, no one venturing to come to my assistance with a boat. Shortly after, my missing brother also came on board by the same expeditious method, he having narrowly escaped being killed by the advancing enemy, who, unable to dislodge our men from the houses on the plaza, with characteristic brutality, set fire to the thatch with which they were roofed, and in a few moments the whole town was enveloped in flames. By the glare of these we were enabled to pour grape and shot from the steamer upon the incendiaries, many of whom fell while in the act of applying the torch to the roof that sheltered the Llaneros; the latter then retreated toward the steamer, now become the scene of action. Unfortunately, the pivot-gun, which had in the commencement done such terrible execution, got out of order after a few rounds; but we still retained the use of two carronades, and these were admirably served by my young friend Roseliano

and Manuel Escurra, another brave youth from Caracas.

We were so near the landing that, although the night was very dark after the conflagration subsided, we could plainly distinguish the red caps of the enemy by the flash of our cannon. As these did not seem to produce much impression upon them, we resorted to smaller arms, which we could use to greater advantage, being, from the strength of the river current and the want of engineers on board, unable to turn the steamer.

The contest was steadily maintained during the entire night, and although the odds were greatly against us, we were unwilling "to give up the ship" in hopes that Andrade—who we knew was but a short distance off—would recross the river and attack the enemy on the rear. When morning dawned, instead of friends, we saw only the red caps of our foes appearing through the fences and windows of the houses fronting the river, from whence issued volleys of destructive fire. We returned it for awhile, but convinced at last of the inutility of prolonging the struggle, I endeavored to set in motion the machinery of the steamer, aided by the mate, the only one on board who understood any thing of its management. While thus engaged a ball struck my assistant, depriving us of his valuable services at this critical moment. We then endeavored to hoist the anchor, but the strength of the current was such, that we could not bring the steamer up to it. A few blows applied to one of the bolts of the chain severed the connecting links, and we then drifted down the stream.

We had, however, proceeded but a short distance, when we discovered below a bend of the river the smoke pipe of the enemy's steamer, evidently in good position and ready to receive us. But, with no one to direct our craft, and with only sick and wounded on board, we could offer no further resistance. Several of our men sprang into the water and swam ashore to avoid being made prisoners, among them my wounded brother Tomas, whom I never saw again. I would have followed their example, but for my cherished note and sketch books, which I had stored away in the steamer, and I preferred captivity to the loss of either.

Having no white flag at hand, a shirt was immediately hoisted at the topmast, in lieu of it, as a signal of surrender, thus realizing the witty parody on Voltaire's Œdipus,

"Quand on a tout perdu, et qu'il n'y a point d'espoir," &c.

But the enemy's steamer threatening to fire upon us if we did not drop anchor, we, having none, fastened a stout rope round a carronade and rolled it overboard. Thus ended our first campaign against Monagas.

Fortunately we fell into the hands of our old acquaintance General Briceño, a man distinguished for his humanity toward the vanquished, and he received us on board his steamer with delicate and high-bred courtesy. We then learned that the officer who led the attack against the town was no other than the famous Ezequiel Zamora, who, from being a convict and the comrade of Rangel, was raised to the rank of General by the unscrupulous ruler of unhappy Venezuela. Zamora was one of those most desperate char-

acters, without education or social position, who, in South America, often rise amid the whirl of civil discord. He would have put to death all his prisoners, as he had done in former times, but for the strict injunctions of General Briceño, who had previously warned him against any acts of cruelty toward them. This wretch has lately forfeited his life in his renewed endeavors to reinstate the sway of a rapacious family at the expense of his country's weal.

As for the indirect author of our misfortunes, Andrade, we afterward heard that he had capitulated to the commander of the forces of Monagas in the province of Merida, who allowed him to retire into New Granada with all who wished to follow him. We were less fortunate, being taken back to Maracaibo, the same day, there to await the pleasure of the Commander-in-chief, Castelli. As we sailed out of the river Escalante and past Congo Bay, my thoughts involuntarily turned to the humble fisherman in his hut, who, months before, as if impressed with a presentiment of our approaching catastrophe, had offered to conduct me in his canoe to New Granada. How gladly would I now have availed myself of his services; but it was, alas! too late. From Maracaibo we were taken to Caracas, and there confined in a filthy jail in company with some of the worst characters in the country. As a crowning climax, we were loaded with irons, and treated in all respects like common felons by orders of the late butcher of his country's representatives. We only owed our preservation and obtained our passports for Curaçao to the untiring efforts of our lamented friend Don Juan

Manuel Muñoz y Funes, brother-in-law to Queen Cristina, and Spanish Minister at Caracas, a true Spanish hidalgo, whose name will be ever cherished by the Venezuelian people. Noble at heart, as well as in principle, his main effort, while in our midst, was to conciliate, by his gentlemanly demeanor rather than through treaties, the long pending difficulties between his nation and her former colony of the Main. Although his demise occurred while absent from his post, Caracas paid to his memory, in solemn funeral obsequies, that tribute of love and respect only shown to the most favored of her sons.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PAEZ.

After a separation of fifteen months, during which time many hardships and vicissitudes had been experienced on both sides, we had the happiness, on the 18th of April, of rejoining our Leader, then at Curaçao, entirely recovered from his late illness, and ready to take the field once more against the oppressor of his country. Scarcely a week elapsed, which did not bring us tidings of some new act of high-handed persecution against unoffending citizens. The property of the disaffected was seized, wherever found; entire cattle estates were relieved of their herds, by the followers of Monagas, while the revenues of the custom houses were appropriated at once as the patrimony of his family. A reign of terror was established at the capital, and throughout the most important districts of the country. Gregorito, a son of the weak-minded José Gregorio, vied with the ferocious Juan Sotillo, in the exploits by which they endeavored to maintain the prestige of the dreaded fraternity.*

* An honorable exception must be made of the sons of José Tadeo, who bore no part in these atrocities, and whose exemplary conduct and

To arrest, if possible, further iniquities, and being urged repeatedly from all quarters of the republic to come to the rescue of the inhabitants, General Paez, with a select body of officers, sailed for Coro on the 1st of June—a successful pronunciamento having already been effected in the province—and immediately took the field with the troops collected there. Although these scarcely amounted to one thousand, our Leader felt confident that the people in other parts would follow the example of those of Coro, and lend him their support, as had been previously offered him. With the object of ascertaining the extent of what they promised, our little army, encumbered with a long train of baggage-donkeys and mules, mostly loaded with ammunition, and three hundred reserved muskets —commenced their march toward the east on the 20th, this being the most expeditious way of deciding the contest with our enemies. We encamped the first night at Taratara, the scene of a former struggle with them, the recollection of which afforded me no grounds for dreams of future triumphs.

The next stopping-place was the town of Cumarebo, pleasantly located on the summit of a mountain, and celebrated in the history of the country as being also the scene of several sanguinary conflicts between royalists and patriots. Thus might one travel from Maracaibo to Maturin—the two extreme ends of the republic—over one continuous battle-ground, the war arena for half a century of a people scarcely numbering one million of souls.

gentlemanly demeanor gained them the respect of the inhabitants, and contrasted singularly with the actions and rough manners of the remainder of the family.

Cumarebo gave to us a few additional volunteers, and the mountains of San Luis a small column of infantry, which together increased our effective force to about eight hundred. On the night of our arrival at Cumarebo, we were entertained for a couple of hours by the recitation of some poems, by a talented negro slave, belonging to the family at whose house we were stopping, and composed by him in honor of General Paez. Our pleasure and astonishment were enhanced upon learning that this rude poet—unable to read or write—was forced to commit to memory his compositions even as he conceived them.

On the 23d, we resumed the march through a delightfully shaded road, with occasional openings of green savannas, and halted at Piritu, a town of little importance, but which nevertheless contributed its full quota of volunteers to the good cause. These formed part of the force under General Carmona, who was already posted on the road to Puerto Cabello.

No less patriotic were the young ladies of this place, who, in addition to an address read by them in verse to our Leader, prepared for him a chair of state, adorned with flags and other allegorical emblems. Piritu is likewise noted for the beauty of its climate and surrounding scenery. From our quarters in the plaza, I enjoyed at the same time a view of the mountain range on which the town is situated, and of the famous valley of the Yaracuy, toward the south. Lack of space, and of adequate language, prevents a description of that magnificent valley, which, upon its wild bosom, bears many a winding river pursuing

their silent course to the Caribbean Sea, through dense forests of invaluable vegetable products, and over vast savannas, rivalling in freshness even those of the Apure. With regret I turned away from this enchanting view, to join the main body of our troops, now far beyond the town. My duties as aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief, necessarily required my constant attendance at his side, often depriving me of the contemplation of scenes more in harmony with my tastes.

We tarried for two days on the plains of Curari, to procure a herd of cattle, as our march was to be henceforth through a complete wilderness, the plan of the campaign having been altered, in order to reach the Llanos—the goal of our Leader's aspirations —by a short cut: his deficiency in cavalry, and the certainty of a movement in his favor so soon as the people there should hear of his landing, rendered this change expedient.

On the 24th, we reached the village of Jacura, where we expected to incorporate the force under Carmona. In this, however, we were disappointed, as Carmona insisted upon being left behind to guard against any attack on our rear; a precaution hardly necessary, having little to fear in this respect from the population of Coro. A lofty range of mountains intervened between this province and the Llanos, while the force at our command was insufficient to cope with the numerical strength of our opponents.

Undeterred by the almost insuperable obstacles to be encountered on the route, our Leader gave the order to march southward, impelled thereto by that

righteous, self-sacrificing spirit, which has ever been his guide.

The first few leagues of the journey convinced us that we had taken the wrong road; but to return was now impossible: so, forcing our way through tangled branches, and skirting fearful precipices, we reached at length the ranch of Guararipana, inhabited by an old negro, Anselmo, who, with his family of half a dozen daughters and as many boys, were the only human beings we had encountered since leaving Jacura.

On the 29th, we descended the first range of mountains, and encamped on the borders of the Rio Tocuyo, which we crossed with great difficulty on the following day, having only one small canoe in which to transport ourselves and our heavy baggage.

Owing to the incessant rains, the road, or rather path, had become impassable, so that we advanced but little on the 30th; and our weary troops were compelled to encamp supperless on the slope of a precipitous mountain, as soon as it grew dark. Several of our animals, missing their footing, rolled down the precipice, and among them my own horse, which, fearing a fall, I was driving before me. Unwilling to give him up for lost, I followed his descent, but presently found myself imbedded to my knees in the most adhesive mud, enveloped in complete darkness, and with little or no hope of rejoining my companions. My chief dread was that I might fall into the jaws of some ferocious panther, or step upon some of the horrid serpents abounding there. Never had I known real terror until that fearful night. After long

and desperate struggles to free myself from the mud, and assisted by occasional gleams of light from the very large and numerous fire-flies, I finally succeeded in extricating myself from the "slough of despond" into which my horse had led me. Happily I soon overtook a soldier driving a tired horse, which, in the darkness, I at first had mistaken for a panther. From the man I learned, to my great relief, that the advance guard was encamped further on, upon the banks of the rivulet or *quebrada* of Cararapa, toward which he was now going. We therefore walked along in company, driving the horse before us, to serve, if necessary, as a scapegoat to the tigers. I arrived at last safe and sound, with only the loss of my shoes and an excellent horse, at the *quebrada*. Speedily doffing my muddy garments, I devoted myself to most thorough ablutions; and after well washing my clothes, I squatted down, Indian fashion, to dry them and myself before a blazing fire. Such are some of the delights of campaigning among the mountains of South America.

We wandered through tangled forests, and over the lofty Sierra of Aroa—famous for the richness of its copper mines and the boldness of its panthers—until the 5th of August, when we descended to the valley of Yaracuy, dispersing some guerillas we encountered, without any serious casualties on our side. We afterward passed through several villages on the route; but although the inhabitants were known to be friendly disposed toward us, they invariably disappeared at our approach, doubtless afraid to compromise themselves.

On the 7th, we reached the summit of another range of mountains, mostly covered with verdant meadows, admirably adapted for raising sheep, although not a single flock of these useful animals exists there. We slept at the farm of Pontezuela, where we noticed some fine cattle, and on the 8th prepared to march on the ancient city of Nirgua, where the enemy was reported to be in force. We still held as prisoners of war, the Governor appointed by Monagas in Coro, his military commander, General Valero, of ventriloquial celebrity, and other worthies, who being more of an encumbrance than profit, our Commander-in-Chief paroled them all, and left them behind, unwilling to expose their persons to the bullets of their own friends. The latter, however, retired at our approach, and we occupied the city without the least opposition.

Nirgua is the third city in antiquity of those founded by the Spaniards on the New Continent, as its present dilapidated state shows ; but it would be difficult to find a more delicious climate or lovelier environs. It is situated upon a high plateau, surrounded by still higher mountains, from whose summit there flows ever an unceasing current of refreshing air. There we enjoyed what we stood most in need of, viz., a day of rest and a good dinner, but no pronunciamento, most of the men having previously been driven from the town by a despotic military commander.

We had not been molested by the enemy in some days ; but, on the morning of the 10th, a large force, composed of infantry and cavalry, appeared on our

rear, drawn up on the heights commanding the city. We expected every moment to be attacked, and prepared to receive them, our policy being throughout the campaign, to maintain ourselves strictly on the defensive. Observing that the enemy did not seem disposed to risk a battle in the narrow streets of Nirgua, we took our positions outside, on the road leading to Valencia, when—supposing we were attempting our escape—they rushed down upon us most furiously. Without flinching, we awaited their approach in good order of battle—so much to their chagrin, that without advancing within range of our muskets, they poured upon us volleys of vulgar abuse. Unwilling to waste our time and ammunition upon the miserable rabble, we moved slowly on our way over a fine mountain road, evidently much frequented in ordinary times, as attested by the number of *pulperias* and farm-houses, now entirely deserted.

Attracted by the beauty of the scenery and abundance of resources, we pitched our camp early, in the evening, in the charming vale of El Potrero, the seat of a fine farm, well stocked with poultry, vegetables, and cattle; and these being considered common property in times of civil war, we fared well that night, especially as there was no one about the premises to claim them.

The advance guard had some hot work that night with the pickets of another force in front of us, showing very conclusively that we were hemmed in between two fires, as the other phalanx from Nirgua, although moving on very cautiously, was known to be approaching our position. Still, when morning

dawned, we prepared to move forward, in hopes of soon effecting a junction with the cavalry of the Llanos, our Leader having received positive information at Nirgua that a great portion of that warlike section of the republic was already in arms against Monagas.

The road from El Potrero passes over a low range of hills, from whose summit we enjoyed a fine view of the enchanting plain of Albahacas; and several miles beyond, the coffee-bearing mountains of Montalban—decked in the choicest products of a temperate clime—lifted here and there giant peaks amid a hovering veil of fleecy clouds. In vain we strained our eyes in the endeavor to descry the position of the force opposed to us, in that direction. Concealed by the woody copses along the numerous streams of the plain, the enemy awaited our approach, ready to spring upon us like sneaking hyenas from their lairs. Onward we went through mire and rain, without meeting with any accident until we reached the middle of the plain. Having halted to prepare our morning meal at a deserted inn, the usual precautions were taken to guard against a surprise; but before we had had time to light the fires, the advance guard, which had been posted on the banks of a river on our left, was suddenly attacked by a large force under cover of the woods skirting the river, while our front and right flank were menaced at the same time by large masses of infantry and cavalry. Before we came to blows with these, our little band on the left, commanded by the brave American, Captain Clements, put to flight the force opposed to him, which so

affrighted the others—especially as they could not ascertain our actual numbers on account of the woods —as to cause an immediate change in their tactics, resulting in an inglorious retreat toward the neighboring woods. Without giving them time to recover from their astonishment, we pushed boldly on across the plain, anxious to regain the higher ground, where we could more easily defy their whole force, in case they were disposed to renew the attack. Some ineffectual attempts were made by detachments of cavalry to head us off, but their infantry did not show itself until it was too late to arrest our progress.

Once again on high ground, we could with ease view the various *corps d'armée* operating against us on the plain of Albahacas. Without reckoning the forces which so mysteriously disappeared in the woods on our right and front, there was to the left of the position lately occupied by us, and screened by the intervening ridge of woods along the river banks, a long line of cavalry, 2,000 strong, besides the corps of infantry so bravely repulsed by Captain Clements. It was a fortunate circumstance that our victorious soldiers, while endeavoring to ford the river in pursuit of the flying enemy, wetted their powder, compelling them to return to their positions, thereby escaping the onset of the enemy's hidden cavalry. The road from Nirgua was held by the force which had hovered on our rear the day before; while the host which attempted to intercept our march toward the mountains could not have been less than seven hundred. In all, the enemy numbered about five thousand men!

We remained in undisturbed possession of the field

until night, when, having rested sufficiently from our fatigues of that day, we took the road to the Llanos, leaving our discomfited foes to concoct a more successful scheme for entrapping us. We had laid the "flattering unction to our souls," that the most difficult part of the journey had been already accomplished, as it was impossible to conceive of a worse road than the one we had left behind us; but a few steps onward in the darkness revealed to us the folly of our hopes; and we found that there was greater danger of being hurled into eternity down one of the surrounding precipices, than from the comparatively harmless fire of the enemy. Trusting more to our own hands and feet than to the four-footed beasts to scramble with us up the steep ascent, the few who were still fortunate enough to ride a horse, dismounted and performed this portion of the journey partly on all fours. When midnight came, the whole army was fairly exhausted by fatigue and hunger, and dispirited also, having lost all prospect of ameliorating its condition. The only refuge left us from our sorrows was in sleep; so, spreading our ponchos upon a bleak and rugged peak several thousand feet above the level of the plains we were in quest of, officers and privates were soon on a level with each other. When we rose at early dawn to proceed on our weary journey, the ground around us was frozen like the hearts of the wanderers when remembering that, though inveigled into this hazardous enterprise by our own countrymen, as yet not one had ventured out of his hiding place to give us even the least information concerning the state of affairs in the republic.

This day's march, though not so fatiguing to our troops, as we had already attained the summit of the Cordillera, and were now on the descent, was none the less discouraging, from the absolute scarcity of provisions along the route. Late in the afternoon the advance guard surprised a post of about a hundred men, who fired a few shots and then decamped, leaving in the possession of our famished soldiers a slaughtered cow, which they were preparing to roast. Somewhat strengthened by this unexpected meal, we were enabled to push forward to the next post, arriving late in the evening at the hamlet of Casupo, which proved to be deserted, but where we found abundant stock of cattle and waving fields of Indian corn.

We expected to have reached El Tinaco, a town on the borders of the Llanos, the next day; but, on resuming the journey, we discovered the heights commanding the road already occupied by a large band of ragamuffins under Zamora, who, as a matter of course, commenced the attack upon our advancing columns with volleys of abuse, before they bethought themselves of their arms. Disregarding both, and not even firing a shot in return, our Commander-in-Chief ordered the advance up a steep mountain on the right of their position—a movement evidently mistaken by the enemy for unwillingness on our part to fight at all; for, shouting in exultation, they came precipitately down upon us. Our Leader had anticipated this result of his ruse. When, therefore, they were sufficiently detached from their inaccessible eyrie, Colonel Minchin, who commanded the rear guard, charged upon them with the bayonet, killing forty, and scat-

tering the remainder like a flock of geese. But six of our number were killed and eighteen wounded—among the latter Lieutenant Minchin, son of the gallant Colonel, who, perceiving the young man fainting from loss of blood, quietly said to him: "Stay behind, my son, until I punish these rascals." Their cavalry, five hundred strong, was drawn up in a valley at the foot of the mountain, evidently intending to fall upon us if we were defeated; but on a platoon of infantry being brought against them, they all turned tail and disappeared before our soldiers had even a chance to empty their muskets. We then continued our march through the valley without further molestation, by words or acts, from our despicable enemy.

Although this part of the country showed more signs of human life than the portion preceding it, we did not encounter a single person on the route until we arrived at Vallecito, a prettily-located farm several miles beyond Casupo. Our attention was here attracted to the following inscription in large characters upon the lintel of the farm-house—a sentiment which should find a place in every homestead in the land:

DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE OTHERS DO UNTO YOU; AND LET THE WAYWORN TRAVELLER EVER FIND REST AND COMFORT BENEATH THIS HUMBLE ROOF.

On the strength of this Christian and hospitable invitation, our Commander-in-Chief and his staff rode into the courtyard of the farm-house, where the owner, Señor Mercedes Cepeda—a singularly appropriate name—came to receive us with every manifestation of cordiality. All the other houses on the transit were

deserted by the inhabitants, our mendacious enemies having spread the report that we came to ravage their firesides, with many other accusations of a similar character.

While these infamous slanders were being maliciously circulated by the abettors of the tyrant, the authors were themselves actually perpetrating the villanous acts which they had attributed to us among the people of the Llanos, who, not receiving prompt information of our approach, had fallen a prey to the sanguinary hordes of Juan Sotillo before we could render them any assistance. Calabozo and Chaguaramas, the two most important towns in the plains, particularly aroused Sotillo's wrath to a degree that threatened the entire extermination of the whites in both places. Several prominent persons were brutally murdered, and their bodies horribly mutilated by the "Minotaur of Santa Anna."* Of this number were the noble brothers Belisarios, of Chaguaramas, whose salted heads were sent, along with those of Dr. Peña and Miguel Coucin, of Calabozo, by Sotillo, to Monagas as the most acceptable present to his "Compäe Tadeo." Previous to this, however, he carried these trophies to Calabozo, and halting before the house of the bereaved family, ordered the matron Doña Petrona Camacho, Coucin's mother-in-law, and one of the most distinguished ladies in the city, to be brought into his presence, and in the most insulting and barbarous language announced to her the vandalic deed! And

* Santa Anna, a village in the Llanos of Barcelona, Sotillo's birthplace.

this monster is still at large, and still perpetrating similar acts of barbarity in my country!

Convinced of the inutility of prosecuting the campaign, General Paez, rather than sacrifice his faithful companions in a hopeless struggle, despatched on the 14th two commissioners to General Silva, Commander-in-Chief of the forces opposed to him, proposing a termination of hostilities under certain conditions. The commissioners returned in the afternoon of the same day with an unsatisfactory reply, when our Leader at once decided to send his chief of staff, General Cordero, competently authorized to arrange the basis of a capitulation with Silva, to whom he addressed the following letter:

To the Commander of the Forces operating in this Province.

SIR:

On my arrival at the seat of Albahacas the 11th inst., I learned that your Excellency was at the head of the army to oppose my progress. I then resolved to invite your Excellency to terminate the civil war in a pacific manner; but before closing my communication, I was attacked and obliged to defend myself. I entertain to-day the same sentiments that, upon the 11th, I was about to communicate to you; they are those which, as Commander-in-Chief and as President of the Republic, I have always practised.

I wish to put an end to the present contest without adding to the calamities which the country already so bitterly deplores; and I believe this can be speedily effected if your Excellency adopts the meas-

ures I propose through my chief of staff, General Leon de Febres Cordero.

(Signed,) PAEZ.

HEAD-QUARTERS AT THE SEAT OF VALLECITO,
August 15, 1849.

In accordance with the wishes expressed in the above communication, General Cordero entered into an agreement with Silva, by which the latter engaged himself to guarantee the lives, and respect the persons of all the officers and soldiers under the immediate orders of our Commander-in-Chief, who only wished permission to quit the country as speedily as possible; the officers retaining their swords, and the rank and file to be immediately discharged. Upon these conditions, and trusting to the assurance given by Silva that the terms of this capitulation should be respected by those in authority, our brave soldiers resigned their arms to the officers appointed by Silva to receive them, and the General-in-Chief, accompanied by his officers, then rode over to Macapo Abajo, the head-quarters of the former.

On the 16th, we all started for Valencia, the capital of the province Carabobo, so named in honor of the battle-field where Paez sealed forever the independence of his country. While upon the road to Valencia, we had the pleasure of riding through that celebrated battle-ground, which circumstance fully repaid some of us for all the hardships and privations we had thus far endured, the victor himself acting on this occasion as our *cicerone*. We listened with intense interest to his account of that memorable en-

gagement, as he pointed out to us the most noteworthy features of the field. Here the heroic British Legion received unmoved, and gallantly repelled, the successive charges with the bayonet, and the raking fire of the whole Spanish infantry. There the famous *Guardia de Honor*—Paez' body-guard—swept like the thundering tornado over the plain, spreading terror and destruction among the enemy's cavalry. Further beyond, "the bravest of the brave," General Cedeño, and the fiery young commander, Ambrosio Plaza, fell in their eagerness to share with Paez the honors of the day, the skilful and rapid manœuvring of his division having secured the triumph of the republican arms ere the respective commands of the fallen heroes could participate in the battle. Then the conqueror, "his brows bound with victorious wreaths," was hailed with the wildest, most enthusiastic acclamations of the multitude: the respectful homage of his brother soldiers was his. Then how almost overwhelming the adulation lavished upon him from every side! How great the contrast now! Over that same field where he had achieved the freedom of his country, he now passed unarmed and a prisoner, in the hands of those countrymen, whom, having delivered from vassalage, he had now striven to save from tyrannical oppression, and so sacrificed himself.

Midway between Carabobo and the capital, Zamora's dastardly mob, that would not face our bayonets at Casupo, was the first to assail us, now that we had been deprived—contrary to the agreement with Silva—of our swords. The utmost efforts on the part of the es-

cort furnished by the General for our preservation were required to prevent a wholesale butchery of our party. As we approached Valencia, the mob, instigated by the Governor, Joaquin Herrera, became more and more threatening, while a Captain Perez, an assassin in the employ of that functionary, and doubtless commissioned by him to commence the bloody fray, deliberately rode into the midst of our party, blunderbuss in hand. Selecting Colonel Celis for his first victim, he endeavored to shoot him, but his blunderbuss fortunately missed fire. Various other attempts to murder us were made by the desperadoes; but, thanks to the resolute stand taken by the commander of the escort, we were enabled to reach Valencia in safety.

Foiled in this, the Governor now resorted to other no less criminal plans for our extermination. No sooner were we within the precincts of the plaza, than the vandals of Zamora surrounded us, and we should doubtless have been sacrificed, but for the earnest remonstrances of General Silva, who was in honor bound to protect us. Herrera then ordered us to dismount, and notwithstanding he had given his consent that the ladies of Valencia might prepare comfortable quarters for all, marched us into that filthy hole, the city prison. There he crowded us nearly to suffocation into a small room swarming with vermin, while most of our effects, together with the furniture of the house prepared for our reception, became the spoil of his mercenary dependents. The next day our respected Leader and other prominent officers were load-

ed with irons, while our soldiers were distributed among the plantations of the Government officials.

Not satisfied with the ignominious treatment he gave us, Herrera concocted with Zamora, who became our jailer on this occasion, the plan of confining our Leader alone—though then suffering from illness—in a damp and ruinous apartment, open to the rains and dews of night. I entreated permission to accompany him, and although Zamora at first objected, Herrera finally consented, and I was allowed to attend my aged father. The rest of our companions were sent, some to fill the crumbling vaults of the fortifications at La Guaira, others to share the felons' quarters in the common jail of Caracas.

After being subjected for many days to this barbarous treatment, the order came from Monagas to send us also to the capital, under the escort of our epauletted jailer, who took particular pains, on the way thither, to torment us in every conceivable manner; sometimes denying us the comfort of a quiet rest at night; at other times inciting the populace, but more especially the slaves of the plantations on the route, against the venerable captive. On one occasion Zamora called out the whole gang of negroes from an estate near Maracay, and taking a young one from the arms of its mother, commenced caressing it, to flatter the vanity of the blacks, whom he addressed in the following words: "Here, boys, comes the Lord and Master who has kept you in bondage all these years, while we *Liberales* have been striving to free you; henceforth you will be at liberty to do just as you please." After this harangue, it is almost super-

fluous to add we were at the mercy of the frantic blacks, who, armed with stones and cutlasses, would have torn us to pieces, but for the officers of the escort, who hurried us out of reach.

It is in this manner that the demagogues of Venezuela—and, indeed, of the whole of South America, I may add, with few exceptions—seeking only their own aggrandizement, have brought that fine region to the verge of barbarism. Not only have they annihilated the conservative element which alone gave them guarantees, but placed a most terrible weapon —such as universal suffrage—in the hands of a caste naturally antagonistic to the white race, and by far the more prolific of the two. The fearful revolution which has been raging in Venezuela for the last three years—although ostensibly for political ascendency—is nothing but the "irrepressible conflict" brought by these social renegades, and which, if not speedily neutralized by a well-sustained stream of immigration, will ultimately sweep away the remnants of civilization from my unhappy country. Notwithstanding that the constitution of the republic, framed after that of the United States, was most liberal in all respects, the demagogues calling themselves the liberal party, in order to gain proselytes, commenced by demanding, on behalf of the colored races, privileges and franchises which they are incapable of appreciating. I have shown elsewhere how nearly they accomplished their object with the overthrow of the conservative element and institutions of the country. The turmoil and confusion of that revolt brought a bolder and more unscrupulous political aspirant to fill the Presi-

dential chair, which a worthy magistrate, General Soublette, had occupied with honor, but unfortunately not with that firmness required at this critical period of our political organization. His successor, though possessing that quality in a high degree, with almost unparalleled ingratitude, turned it against the party that had raised him to power, appealing for support to the blacks, he being himself a white man. When, after a time, he discovered his influence nearly gone, and the power of his family tottering under the imbecile administration of his brother José Gregorio, he sanctioned the decree of emancipation enacted by the latter, in order to gain over the colored population, and thus make soldiers of the liberated slaves. He succeeded in this, but at what cost! at the expense of the agricultural interests of the country, and, more especially, of the domestic comfort of the whole community; for not only did the slaves, but the free blacks also, refuse to work for the whites, whom they insulted in all the public thoroughfares, even threatening their lives. Fearing to be utterly exterminated by them, the whites are now striving to save themselves from the curse thus brought upon them. In no instance has the act of these political disorganizers been that of actual philanthropy toward the "downtrodden and oppressed African;" their sole aim was to court the favor, and thus enlist the services of a race numerically stronger than their own.

It was doubtless the conviction that such would finally be the calamitous state of the countries he helped to liberate, that wrung from the great Bolívar this awful prophecy, with regard to the Southern con-

tinent of the New World: "America is ungovernable; those who have served her revolution have ploughed in the sea. These countries will inevitably fall into the hands of the unrestrained multitude, to become then the prey of petty tyrants of all grades and races; when, overpowered by ferocity and barbarism, foreign nations will not even deign to conquer us. Were it possible to return a portion of the earth to primitive chaos, this would be the last period of America." *

Such seems to have been also the opinion of Dr. Poeppig, a learned German naturalist, who visited those countries about that time; and who, in his account of Chili, has the following observations:

"No country in America enjoys to such a degree as Chili the advantages which a state derives from a homogeneous population and the absence of castes. If this young republic rose more speedily than any of the others from the anarchy of the revolutionary struggle, and has attained a high degree of civilization and order, with a rapidity of which there is no example in this continent, it is chiefly indebted for those advantages to the circumstance that there are extremely few people of color among its citizens. Those various transitions of one race into the other are here unknown, which strangers find it so difficult

* La América es ingobernable: los que han servido á la revolucion han arado en el mar: lo mejor que puede hacerse en América es emigrar. Estos paises caeran infaliblemente en manos de la multitud desenfrenada para pasar despues á tiranuelos de todos colores y razas; y estinguidos por la ferocidad y la barbarie, los estrangeros ni se dignaran conquistarnos. Si fuera posible que una parte del mundo volviese al cáos primitivo, ese seria el último periodo de la América.

to distinguish, and which, in countries like Brazil, must lead, sooner or later, to a dreadful war of extermination, and in Peru and Colombia will defer to a period indefinitely remote the establishment of general civilization. * * * If it is a great evil for a state to have two very different races of men for its citizens, the disorder becomes general, and the most dangerous collisions ensue, when, by the unavoidable mixture, races arise which belong to neither party, and in general inherit all the vices of their parents, but very rarely any of their virtues. If the population of Peru consisted of only whites and Indians, the situation of the country would be less hopeless than it must now appear to every calm observer. Destined as they seem by Nature herself, to exist on the earth as a race, for a limited period only, the Indians, both on the north and south of this vast continent, in spite of all the measures which humanity dictates, are becoming extinct with equal rapidity, and in a few centuries will leave to the whites the undisputed possession of the country. With the negroes the case is different; they have found in America a country which is even more congenial to their nature than the land of their origin, so that their numbers are almost everywhere increasing, in a manner calculated to excite the most serious alarm. In the same proportion as they multiply, and the white population is no longer recruited by frequent supplies from the Spanish peninsula, the people of color likewise become more numerous. Hated by the dark mother, distrusted by the white father, they look on the former with contempt, on the latter with an aversion, which cir-

cumstances only suppress, but which is insuperable, as it is founded on a high degree of innate pride. All measures suggested by experience and policy, if not to amalgamate the heterogeneous elements of the population, yet to order them so that they might subsist together without collision, and contribute in common to the preservation of the machine of the state, have proved fruitless. * * * The late revolutions have made no change in this respect. The hostility, the hatred, of the many colored classes will continue a constant check to the advancement of the state, full of danger to the prosperity of the individual citizens, and perhaps the ground of the extinction of entire nations. The fate which must sooner or later befall the greater part of tropical America which is filled with negro slaves, which will deluge the fairest provinces of Brazil with blood, and convert them into a desert, where the civilized white man will never again be able to establish himself, may not indeed afflict Peru and Colombia to the same extent; but these countries will always suffer from the evils resulting from the presence of an alien race. If such a country as the United States feels itself checked and impeded by its proportionably less predominant black population; and if there, where the wisdom and power of the Government are supported by public spirit, remedial measures are sought in vain; how much greater must be the evil in countries like Peru, where the supine character of the whites favors incessant revolutions, where the temporary rulers are not distinguished either for prudence or real patriotism, and the infinitely rude negro possesses only

brutal strength, which makes him doubly dangerous in such countries, where morality is at so low an ebb! He and his half-descendant, the mulatto, joined the white Peruvian, to expel the Spaniard, but would soon turn against their former allies, were they not at present kept back by want of moral energy and education. But the negro and the man of color, far more energetic than the white creole, will in time acquire knowledge, and a way of thinking that will place them on a level with the whites, who do not advance in the same proportion, so as to maintain their superiority." *

* Poepig's Travels in Chili, Peru, &c.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE EXILE.

"Farewell to the land where the gloom of my glory
Arose and o'ershadowed the earth with her name.
She abandons me now—but the page of her story,
The brightest or blackest, is filled with my fame.
* * * * When liberty rallies
Once more in thy regions, remember me then."

BYRON, *Napoleon's Farewell.*

THE reception prepared for us at the capital, by the rulers of the republic, was in keeping with the plan adopted by them from the beginning to get rid of their captive, through a popular tumult, as the best way to cover their own wickedness. Some hours before we approached Caracas, Zamora sent ahead his emissaries to apprise *the people*—as he and his associates were wont to call the rabble—of our coming. When within the city limits, he made straight for the plaza, the rendezvous of all the loafers and negro porters of the town, who, notwithstanding the training they had received beforehand, did not dare to assail the "Illustrious Citizen," * except with

* Illustrious Citizen. An honorary title conferred on General Paez by a special act of Congress.

empty words and angry faces. It was, however, gratifying not to observe amidst the crowd a single white person on this occasion.

From the plaza to the filthy jail—the mansion prepared for the "Father of his Country"—was but a short distance; and I was glad when at length the gates of that ominous abode were opened to receive us, and closed upon the vociferous crowd outside. The scene of replacing the heavy irons—taken off the feet of our Leader to permit him to ride on horseback—was again gone through, and father and son were plunged into a dark hole, with scarcely any air to breathe. The former, however, bore all these indignities with the calm resignation which never abandoned him under the most trying circumstances; while the latter, taking courage from the example set him by his parent, wrote upon the walls of his prison cell the following lines of Horace:

Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni,
Mente quatit solidâ; neque auster,
Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus;
Sic fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.

TRANSLATION.

The man, in conscious virtue bold,
Who dares his secret purpose hold,
Unshaken hears the crowd's tumultuous cries,
And the impetuous tyrant's angry brow defies.

Let the wild winds, that rule the seas
Tempestuous, all their horrors raise;
Let Jove's dread arm with thunders rend the spheres,
Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears.

Fearing for the security of his prisoner in the capital, Monagas resolved, after a while, to confine General Paez *alone* in the castle of San Antonio, at Cumaná. A special decree was issued at the same time, banishing me for ten years, thus separating me, perhaps forever, from the object of my special solicitude. I immediately addressed the so-called President of Venezuela the following petition, not doubting for a moment that my just request would be granted forthwith:

"The undersigned, at present confined in the prison of this city, represents to your Excellency: That an order having been issued by the Secretary of State, for his immediate expulsion from the Territory of Venezuela, the execution of said order would deprive his father of what little aid and comfort he can afford him.

"The undersigned therefore petitions your Excellency to suspend the execution of said order, until the enactment pending against his father be carried into effect; and to direct that the undersigned be allowed to remain near his person, wherever he may be sent, and continue rendering him the little assistance in his power.

"RAMON PAEZ.

"*Caracas, Sept. 15th*, 1849.

"TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA."

The reply to this appeal was an order to the jailer for the immediate separation from my father, pending the arrangements in progress for his removal to Cumaná, and to confine me within the premises allotted to common criminals. Thus I found myself again in the felon's den, surrounded by beasts of a worse description than those I had encountered in the wilds of my native country. However, I had then the consolation of receiving visitors—a privilege denied my father with few exceptions. To the fair ladies of Caracas in particular, I am indebted for many hours of enjoyment in their charming society. Regardless of the horrors peculiar to that kennel of depravity, and scorning the taunts and sneers of a brutal soldiery, the gentle women of the capital crowded my prison cell from early morning until noon, bringing with them the choicest preserves, and still sweeter bouquets arranged by their own hands. Words are inadequate to express my gratitude for the delicate tokens of regard with which my countrywomen surrounded me in my affliction. They contributed to lighten the weight of the heavy irons with which my feet were again loaded, in revenge—as I supposed—for these delicate tokens of sympathy.

As to my honored father, he was soon after carried off to Cumaná, and thrown into the suffocating dungeons of the fort, where he was treated with the utmost rigor.

The horrors of his captivity have been set forth in the following PROTEST,* addressed by him to his

* The document—printed in letters of gold on crimson velvet—was

savage tormentor, and which now forms the brightest page of his eventful life.

"*To His Excellency General José Tadeo Monagas, Chief of the present Administration of the Republic:*

"SIR:—Imprisoned in this fortress, and oppressed by the executors of your most severe orders, I am, notwithstanding, still the same General-in-Chief of the armies of Colombia and Venezuela, and still the same who received from the Congress of our country, as recompense for his services, the title of Illustrious Citizen.

"My duty toward my country—the calls of the people—compelled me to take up arms in February, 1848. It was then my opinion, as it is now, that the assassination of the representatives of the people, perpetrated on the 24th of January, of that year, was unjustifiable. My political creed is set forth in the documents which I published since that period.

"Persuaded that I have done all that my public duties required, and desirous of putting an end to the war which was devastating the country, I approved the compact of the 15th of last August, a compact entered into, agreeably to my instructions, between the Chief of my General Staff and General José Laurencio Silva, the Chief of your army. What has since transpired you well know. You disapproved that compact which caused me to lay down my arms in perfect confidence; you seized upon the person of myself and of my companions in arms; and when we were

extensively circulated throughout the republic, and handsomely framed to match the "Declaration of Independence."

found unarmed, the most horrible acts of revenge were perpetrated upon us. Let our entry into Valencia, on the afternoon of the 18th of August, bear eloquent testimony of my assertion. The Governor, Joaquin Herrera, glutted in his work of revenge, crowned it by putting heavy irons upon me and several of my companions. I remember those days of horror with a noble pride. The passions of the times cannot deprive me of the consideration which my services to the republic have deserved. I have trodden, and still continue to tread, the path travelled by eminent men, whom an impartial and enlightened world acknowledges as the most zealous defenders of the rights of humanity; as the real friends of that justice and morality which ought to preside over the destinies of nations; as the most perfect friends of the people, for whose welfare every good government should labor incessantly.

"The compact of the 15th of August, signed at Macapo-Abajo or Monagas, has been rejected by you. This, however, cannot be sufficient to quiet your conscience. The fact is before an enlightened world. At present I can only protest, as I do protest, in the most unqualified manner, against the violation of that compact.

"I have been led from prison to prison, until at last I am brought to this fortress, where it seems I am to drain the cup of my sufferings. I hope, however, that Divine Providence will not deprive me of the strength with which I have been favored up to this time, to enable me to resist so many outrages.

"Confined to a very narrow apartment, without

being allowed the least exercise—with a sentinel always in sight—with an officer always by my side at the hours of taking food—denied the privilege of communicating with my family (for I am not permitted to write nor to receive letters from them)—deprived finally of the comforts which the visits of some of my fellow citizens offered me, it seems that the termination of my life is eagerly sought.

"Humanity and civilization must raise their powerful voices against such cruel treatment. Without being a prisoner of war, I find myself imprisoned. I submit to force, and I know well what may be my fate; but I ought not to pass over, in silence, acts which degrade and vilify my country. I ought to protest, and do protest, against such extraordinary and grievous outrages.

"After having, by a decree, remitted the judicial trial to which you supposed I was liable, by what right am I detained a prisoner and ill-treated, as I am? Though my expulsion has been decreed, I am detained with most glaring injustice—an injustice which is heightened by the means employed to keep me confined, condemned to the horrid punishment of silence and solitude. Is, perchance, the safe custody of one man incompatible with what is due to the dignity of man? Can I not be considered safely secured, without being tormented? Read, sir, the pages of history, and you will learn how persons of my character have been treated in similar cases.

"I have, sir, no favor to ask of you, no grace to implore. My sole object, I have already said, is to protest against the horrors that I am made to endure.

You may continue to act as may seem best to you; but I hope by this protest to furnish one more proof of how much I esteem my personal dignity, and of my readiness to discharge the duties which I owe to the republic over whose destinies I have presided.

"José A. Paez.

"*Cumaná, in the Fortress of San Antonio, 5th February*, 1850."

The anger of the Tyrant on reading this protest may be easily imagined. From that moment the most stringent measures were taken to deprive his victim of life also, by a barbarous and slow process. The only door and the simple window of "his narrow apartment" were closed night and day; and this in the ardent climate of Cumaná, where the thermometer is seldom below 90°. So oppressed was he at times by the closeness of his cell, that he had to lie down near the sill of the door, to inhale what little fresh air came through. How different the usage experienced by Monagas at the hands of General Paez, when the latter had him in his power—Monagas having twice before rebelled against the fundamental law of the republic! On both occasions, Paez not only pardoned him, but reinstated the unruly chieftain in his rank and position in the army; even exerting his influence, at a later period, in securing his elevation to the Presidency, which had been tendered to and declined by Paez.

At length his powerful constitution gave way under this iniquitous treatment, and a rush of blood to the head ensued, which would doubtless have terminated fatally, but for the prompt assistance of two

skilful physicians in the place. The people of Cumaná, aroused to a sense of duty and just indignation, resolved to put a stop to this disgraceful persecution. Men, women, and children rebelled against the minions of the despot, threatening the garrison with destruction, if their victim was not allowed to embark for foreign parts. Congress, then assembled at Caracas—although exclusively devoted to the interest of Monagas—also urged the matter, and the latter was compelled to issue an order to that effect, detailing the steamer Libertador for that purpose. Still, when the vessel arrived at Cumaná short of fuel—as was purposely designed by the Government—and the captain demanded it from the authorities there, he was referred to the Governor of Barcelona. Thither the steamer went to secure it; but, although there was abundance of coal at the place, the brother of Monagas, military commander of the province, under frivolous excuses prevented its shipment. Suspecting something wrong, the captain, who, although in the service of the Tyrant, was a conscientious individual, immediately returned to Cumaná, and laying the case before the people, prompt measures were taken to enable the steamer to proceed on her voyage without delay. Every thing combustible was readily contributed by the generous inhabitants, who gave up, not only the ship timber in the harbor, but even the doors and windows of their houses. It was rumored at the time, that a base plot to drown the General had been concocted between Monagas and an old French pirate, Captain Bernard, who had command of a sailing war-vessel; a

suspicion which was strengthened, shortly after the departure of the steamer, by the arrival of said individual at Cumaná, with orders to take the captive on board his vessel; but it was too late.

On the 24th of May, 1850, "the Martyr of San Antonio" left his prison, followed by an immense concourse of people, who accompanied him in a sort of triumphal procession to the steamer Libertador, which conveyed him afterward to St. Thomas. There I joined my father in time to participate in the hospitalities extended to him by the liberal inhabitants of that wealthy island; and a vessel offering soon after for Philadelphia, we took our departure for

"The land of the free and the home of the brave;"

where we arrived safely on the 26th of July, after a pleasant voyage of eleven days. The city of "brotherly love," through her Common Council, hastened to offer the Venezuelan exile the freedom of her soil; but New York having beforehand sent a commission of gentlemen to await his arrival and tender him a public reception, we left the next day for the Empire City, stopping at Staten Island until the 2d of August, the day fixed for the reception.

Here, patient reader, I would like to entertain you with a full description of the splendid reception and boundless hospitalities tendered to our Leader by the people of the United States, and more especially of that by the city of New York, the place which he had chosen for his future residence; but I fear I have already taxed your time and patience too much with

the recital of our own troubles, while an account of that ovation and the subsequent manifestations of sympathy from the people of the Great Republic would—to do it full justice—require a separate volume. Here we found at length ample repose and security, "under the shade"—to use our Leader's quaint phrase—"of the northern pines," and enjoyed for ten years every social and political privilege, under a free and enlightened government, until subsequent changes in the affairs of Venezuela recalled us from exile and forced our Leader to give up his humble abode in New York for the agitated soil of South America.

Being gone on a visit to Central America, I had almost forgotten Monagas and his arbitrary rule, when I read one day in the "New York Herald," away amidst the wilds of Costa Rica, that a great revolution had occurred in Venezuela, and that Monagas was besieged in his own house in Caracas. On my return to the United States, I was gratified to find in New York a number of Commissioners despatched by the Provisional Government of Venezuela, to invite General Paez back to his liberated country, and to express to him the unanimous wish of the people for his immediate return; a desire which he hastened to comply with, but which nearly cost him his life. The military authorities of New York having tendered him a grand review of all their corps, previous to his departure, he was riding toward the parade grounds, in company with Governor King and a numerous staff, when his horse fell three times under him on the slippery pavement of Broadway, the animal's weight crushing his foot in the most frightful manner; and

although he was immediately surrounded with the best surgical skill in the city, his life was despaired of for a time, unless his powerful constitution should come to his rescue, which happily took place. His presence in Venezuela being of the utmost importance at the time, he was removed, while still suffering from his severe accident, to one of the steamers placed at his disposal by the Government of the United States—a compliment rarely paid to foreigners, and consequently highly appreciated by us all. A brilliant retinue, composed principally of the Venezuelan Commissioners, His Honor the Mayor of New York, (Daniel F. Tieman Esq.,) and members of the Common Council, with delegations from the militia of the city and county of New York, accompanied the ambulance in which he was conveyed, and escorted by a detachment of the City Horse Guards, on board one of the steamers.

The General, with the Commissioners, his private secretary, and several other persons of his retinue, and the lamented Colonel Sandford, son of the Major-General commanding the militia of the city, embarked on board the Wyandotte; the rest of the suite, including my friend E. L. Molineux, Esq., of New York, myself and brother, on board the Mohawk; and on the 25th of November, 1858, we bade adieu to the metropolis of the New World, amid the salvos of artillery, and good wishes of the kind-hearted inhabitants. May peace and prosperity ever be with them!

I wish, for the sake of the nation's credit, that my narrative could end here, instead of being compelled to record, further on, the circumstances of our

second exodus from the country which so earnestly solicited the recall of General Paez from exile. But let us not anticipate unpleasant events; they will be recounted in their place. The city of Cumaná, which so nobly came to his rescue in the hour of his peril, first engaged our Leader's attention, as the most entitled to receive his warm acknowledgments of gratitude for the bold stand she took against his cruel tormentors. Thither the steamers directed their course at his special request; but a dense fog prevailing at the time of leaving the harbor, we lost sight of each other, until our arrival at Cumaná—a circumstance we of the Mohawk lamented exceedingly, on account of the precarious condition of our Leader's health. We also were too late to participate in his reception by the generous Cumanese; our steamer—owing to some derangement in her machinery—arriving in port a week after.

The limits of this chapter do not permit lengthy descriptions of the several ovations and enthusiastic receptions which everywhere greeted the Martyr of San Antonio on his return from exile: they were as spontaneous and cordial, to all appearances, as the conduct of the provisional authorities was cold and reserved toward the General. The "miserable Castro,"—chief of the Provisional Government—with an eye on the chair of state left vacant by the downfall of Monagas, could not support these public manifestations of respect paid to one regarded by him as a dangerous rival, and against whom he had conspired all his life: therefore he lost now no opportunity to annoy him in every possible manner, with the object

of compelling him to abandon the country—which he did, later, of his own accord; unfortunately not soon enough to spare us the affliction occasioned by the death of our estimable guest, Colonel Sandford, who, notwithstanding the assiduous efforts of the whole community to save his life, fell a victim at Valencia to that most fearful pestilence of the equinoctial regions, the *vómito*. Our Leader's grief was extreme on this occasion, appreciating, as we all did, the motives which prompted that amiable young officer to accompany him on his return home.

When sufficiently recovered from his late accident to bear the fatigues of a reception at the capital, the General took his departure for Caracas, glad to quit the scene of his young friend's lamentable demise. But the obnoxious Castro had preceded him there already with the train of Government; and although he was compelled by the force of public opinion to take a part in the reception, the overwhelming display of popular favor which characterized that ovation, only contributed to make him more envious, and, if possible, more ungracious toward the object of his rancor. To show my readers to what extent these petty jealousies are often carried, I will state that, when applied to for permission to employ the military bands of music in the procession, Castro refused flatly, excusing himself with averring that this was altogether a civil affair. The same bands were soon after employed, by Castro's orders, at the release of some negro politicians confined in the jail of Caracas by the civil authorities. Here again the black star of the republic was permitted—for political

reasons—to cast its lurid glimmer over the already clouded atmosphere enveloping the capital. The adherents of Monagas, profiting by the dissensions brought about by Castro among the contending factions, commenced to muster their forces in various parts of the country; and although they were kept at bay for a time, it was plain enough that, unless vigorous measures were adopted for their extermination, they would eventually become a serious annoyance to the Government.

Compelled by circumstances to be a mere spectator in the political farce of changing a tyrannical ruler for an imbecile one, and in danger at any moment of being assailed by the latter, General Paez could no longer be of any service to the country that recalled him from exile: he therefore solicited and obtained his passport for the United States, announcing his immediate departure to the people through a farewell address ending with this earnest appeal to their patriotism:

"Fellow-citizens! Listen once more to the prayer of my heart: continue no longer the course of your destruction: ravage not the beautiful country which Providence has granted you: let your rulers be slaves to the Constitution and laws of the republic: let the people make a wise exercise of their precious rights: let those bloody revolutions, the ignominy of Spanish America, forever cease on our soil. This is all you require to reappear before the world as a wise and prosperous people: such would be the greatest recompense you could accord me—the only one I would

exact from you in return for the new expatriation I impose upon myself."

But instead of permitting him to depart in peace, the provisional despot they had placed at the head of the Government, issued an order to arrest him at La Guaira before he should embark. No one was foolhardy enough, however, to execute it, and he departed for the United States on the anniversary of her independence. Before the month was over, the framer of that order found himself deposed and a prisoner in the Government palace. His successor, Vice-President Tovar, although a man of higher intellect and position in society, with the characteristic selfishness that marks the policy of most rulers in South America, studiously deferred recalling General Paez until after the regular elections, that placed him in the presidency, contenting himself in the meantime with addressing the General a friendly letter, which the latter scarcely regarded in the light of a formal invitation to return. It was probably in allusion to this document that "El Constitucional" of Caracas—the organ of the conservative element in Venezuela—issued the following complimentary notice, which I give here in full, as it embodies the main facts of our Leader's public career:

"With grateful satisfaction we have learned that His Excellency the Vice-President of the Republic has written to our Washington, calling him to the bosom of that country which he liberated with his sword, elevating her to the rank of a nation—giving her a constitution and laws—creating for her a treasure, and acquiring for her a credit, both at home

and abroad, which placed her in the van of the South American republics. How many noble sensations, how many glorious recollections, and how many debts of national gratitude crowd on the imagination on hearing the name of Paez, the living monument of Venezuelan glory!

"The preservation of Paez is one of those great gifts for which Venezuela is indebted to God, who so visibly protects her. Few nations, very few, behold in one man alone the embodiment of their history.

"Paez the young man, consecrated all the fires of his youth to the struggle for his country's independence. From a simple soldier on the borders of the Arauca, he went from victory to victory, and from rank to rank, to the plains of Carabobo. There, amid the smoke of battle, he received from Bolivar the highest military grade to which that splendid and decisive triumph entitled him.

"Paez the General, at the age of reflection, full of prestige and glory, employed all his advantages in nationalizing his country. From a Bogotan province or colony, he raised her to the rank of a nation. He freed her from military despotism, gave her a free constitution, a civil government, wise laws, and subdued the Monagas, the only persons who refused obedience.

"Paez the President, gave to his military companions an example of respectful submission to the laws. Devoted to the interests of his country, he gave her institutions of intellectual and moral progress, created for her a revenue, stimulated her industry and commerce, acquired credit for her at home and abroad,

and raised her to the first rank among the South American republics.

"Paez, the first civil and military character of his country, descended from the presidential chair that he might occupy himself as a simple citizen, and retired to a country life. The Monagas rose against that proof of civil power. Paez abandoned his flocks, and seized once more his sword to repress that attempt. The Monagas being conquered, he pardoned them, and replaced in the presidential chair the wise citizen whom the nation had chosen. This act procured for Paez the golden sword and the title of Illustrious Citizen, which the Congress of his country bestowed upon him.

"Paez, a second time President, gave an impetus to the advancement of Venezuela, and delivered her to his successor, peaceful, prosperous, and admired by all nations, all her pledges observed, and a treasury overflowing with millions of surplus. When, when shall we see her again in so happy a condition? So many services earned for him the admiration of all nations, and the honors and decorations of the kings of England, France, and Sweden.*

* William the Fourth of England, sent to General Paez, in 1837, a magnificent sword, on which were inscribed the following words:—"The gift of King William the Fourth to General Paez, as a mark of esteem for his character, and for the disinterested patriotism which has distinguished his gallant and victorious career. 1837."

The gift was presented by the British Minister in Venezuela, Sir Robert Ker Porter, accompanied by an official note expressive of the high opinion entertained by his sovereign for the character and services of General Paez.

In 1843, the Citizen King of the French, Louis Philippe, named Gen-

"Paez, a second time in the retirement of private life, was astounded at the horrible announcement that Monagas had murdered the representatives of his country in the very sanctuary of the legislative power. Notwithstanding the weight of years, he did not hesitate to take up arms in order to chastise that unheard-of crime. Fortune was not with him in that holy cause. Reduced to the miseries of a dungeon in the castle of San Antonio, and loaded with chains, he did not cease, nevertheless, to protest daily against the atrocity of the crime, in which the people, in the persons of their representatives, were assassinated, and in which, by violating the immunity of the national representation, the basis of the republican system was threatened.

"Paez, at liberty, was hailed by enlightened people as a martyr of civilization and public freedom, and received in the midst of the apotheosis prepared for him by the republic of Washington. In the bosom of the freest people on earth he received great honors and distinguished considerations, when, on the fall of his country's tyrant, whom a simultaneous effort of the people had driven from his blood-stained seat, he was called by the supreme power, and received with transports of enthusiasm in the arms of all his

eral Paez "Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor," and sent him the cross and cordon, the insignia appertaining to that high rank in the Legion.

In 1845, Oscar the First, King of Sweden and Norway, the son of the celebrated Marshal Bernadotte, sent to General Paez the grand cross and insignia of the Military Order of the Sword, with a communication couched in terms expressive of his high regard and esteem for the General.

fellow-citizens, without distinction of party, sex, or age.

"Paez, in Caracas, had no time to receive the demonstrations of gratitude and admiration which the people in mass, and families and citizens in private, lavished upon him. The heroic Cumaná, whose resolution to save him from captivity gave him an exile's liberty, was the first which begged the privilege of bestowing, like a free people, honors on him, whom, a captive, she had before liberated. So many national kindnesses drew upon him the envy of Castro, who aspired to the presidency, and saw in all these manifestations a rival that made him tremble; the more so, since that person's disregard for every law was notorious.

"Paez, persecuted by the miserable Castro, looked upon this matter with the scorn which a venomous reptile causes in a giant; but, doubtless, the idea of seeing friends, to whose loyalty he would have sworn, and for whom he would have given his life—friends whom formerly he had loaded with distinctions, honors, and considerations—indifferent to, or participators in this infamous persecution, must have embittered his hours. The idea rent the heart of Paez. In the silence of his profound grief, no complaint was ever heard against them. Scarcely even did he say with Ovid:

> Donec eris felix, multos numerabis amicos;
> Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris.
>
> In hours of sunshine friends shall countless be;
> Let clouds o'ercast, and lo! they fly from thee.

"Persecuted by the Government and loved by the

people, he saw that persecution and love mutually increased each other, and nourished political passions. The very refusal of the Government to receive him with the honors of his rank, increased much, very much, the enthusiasm of the reception which the people of Caracas and other places gave him. Finally, not to be an object of discord between the people and the Government, he determined to expatriate himself of his own accord, and left Caracas amidst the lamentations of his family and friends, and with the sympathies of the entire population.

Cum repeto noctem quâ tot mihi cara reliqui,
Labitur ex oculis nunc quoque lacryma meis.

When in the night I ask me why I've left
So many faces dear to me, a tear
From out my bosom, by my sorrow cleft,
Will start and, welling to my eye, appear.

"The envy of Castro and of his myrmidons was excited even at the hospitable repose which that venerable man was seeking in a foreign land. Already embarked, the order came to detain him, and a Government vessel started in pursuit. The torments which awaited him are no secret now. Fortunately he could not be overtaken. His friends notified him, a few minutes previously, of the hellish intentions of Governor Castro. Supported in the arms of an oligarchist and a liberal, of a creole and a foreigner, of a patriot general and a Spaniard—in the arms, in fine, of two men, in whom was represented, for the occasion, the fusion of all the opposite and conflicting political feelings in love for the hero, he was con-

ducted without the loss of a moment to the Mole, in the midst of an immense crowd, who showed by word and action the feeling which the great citizen's departure, and the vile persecution to which he was subjected, produced.

"We accompanied the hero to the act of embarkation. We witnessed the efforts of the Government to seize him, and the public indignation which that act of infamous persecution produced in the entire population of La Guaira. We are certain that, if they had succeeded in bringing him back, the people would willingly have shed their blood to rescue him from the fangs of the tigers who thirsted to devour him. Providence, which never is tardy in chastising the wicked, did not permit a month to pass over before Castro found himself in the prison he had prepared for Paez, and the people have not ceased to invoke his presence as the great friend of all Venezuelans, and have called on him to bring his country the olive of peace.

"Paez, in his second exile, returned to receive from the sons of Washington all the attentions and public demonstrations which the consistent defender of popular liberty and the high priest of the republican system deserved.

"In our attempt to glance at the immense volume of Paez's glory, we have scarcely been able to touch some prominent points. It is a work of much time, of laborious research, and much more intelligence.

"Now that Venezuela has conquered" [for a time] "the rebellion against her institutions, and the legitimacy of her Government has shown the omnipotence

of her power, the Vice-President turns his eyes to the founder of our republic, to call him to her bosom, that he may contribute, with the great power of his vast sympathies, and with the wisdom of his counsels, to the re-establisment of peace and harmony amongst all Venezuelans.

"We congratulate Mr. Tovar on such a very just and proper measure, and hope that our Congress, imitating the great Convention which yielded the magnanimity of this act to the executive power alone, may grant an honorable recall to the great citizen, to whom we owe independence, nationality, and civil power. There will not be even one member of Congress who will not glory in aiding with his vote an act which justice, gratitude, national dignity, and the pride of the Venezuelan name demand.

"CARACAS, *May* 3, 1859.

In conclusion, I will add that, notwithstanding the state of anarchy then reigning in the country, and the almost unanimous wish of the contending parties to submit to the arbitrament of General Paez, the guardians of public safety did not see fit to recall him *officially* until it was too late for him to be of much service. The fear of strengthening his popularity—should he succeed in settling the pending difficulties—appears to have had more weight with them than the paramount exigency of averting a war of castes. Well has Darwin said, in his account of Buenos Ayres: "That country will have to learn, like every other South American State, that a repub-

lic cannot succeed till it contains a certain body of men imbued with the principles of justice and honor."

And now, patient reader, having accomplished my task to the best of my ability, I bid you farewell, trusting that our peculiar mode of warfare—into which I have unavoidably led you—has proved no less novel and exciting than the rest of these Wild Scenes.

THE END.

8546 5